

**EXPLORING THE MEANINGS AND CULTURAL
LANDSCAPES OF ELDER RESIDENTS IN TWO
SASKATCHEWAN RURAL COMMUNITIES**

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College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Ph.D. Degree in the Department of Geography,
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ABSTRACT

Using ethnomethodology and influenced by ethnography, the purpose of this research has been to explore the meanings that elder residents in and around Hafford, SK and Val Marie, SK derive from their relationship with and confer upon their cultural landscapes. Hence, for a month and a half, I lived in Hafford and then Val Marie in order to speak with elder residents (age 60 or over) who have lived and worked in or around these areas for at least twenty years.

The meanings of elder residents hinge on their memories of growing up and making a living when younger. Their meanings also resonate with the ideas and perspectives that these individuals have formed regarding the changes in their cultural landscape. Changes include those to agriculture; service provision; and the formation of the Grasslands National Park for which Val Marie is the gateway community and Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve in which Hafford is located.

The broad themes of connections, separation, and continuity that I distilled in the narratives of elder residents have guided the identification of the meanings. To this end, the cultural landscape concept has provided an ideal framework. Including the different and diverse meanings of elder residents is integral to our conception of the cultural landscape as a whole, a characteristic that assists in guiding change and development in these communities.

In particular, elder residents contribute to an ethical landscape infused with meanings engendered by sentiments of connections, separation, and continuity and ones that hearken to their ethics. Such meanings can have a substantive impact on the decisions influencing these areas. Furthermore, as part of intangible cultural heritage, elder residents offer the meanings they have forged as well as their ethics, the ongoing result of having lived and worked in their cultural landscape.

This research has helped to bring relief to the meanings of elder residents in Hafford and Val Marie. Such meanings are necessary in the overall identity of the cultural landscape. The meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape are a valuable asset for communities seeking to maintain their social and economic viability and sustainability.

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And finally, my thanks to the magpies, crows, robins and other birds of a feather who oversee the whirl of this place from atop its roofs and parapets, the tips of its trees, and the endless sky above!



DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad

&

To Family and Friends – Often One in the Same

&

To Peace and Justice

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Beh-REB: Behavioural Research Ethics Board

CPR: Canadian Pacific Railway

GNP: Grasslands National Park

ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage

MAB: Man and Biosphere

NWMP: Northwest Mounted Police

RLBR: Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve

RPP: The Redberry Lake Pelican Project (Canada)
Foundation

SAFE: Students All For the Earth

UNCED: United Nations Conference on Environment
and Development

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE

23 January, 2005, (afternoon)

Hafford, SK

Getting comfortable

Sunny and blue. I've arranged the tables Valerie brought so they form a good-sized desk in front of a side window. My view is not very inspiring when you first look out and see a house. But then, one ponders. Is it still occupied? When was it built and by whom? Care was taken as the window facing me consists of two-thirds window with the upper third a stained glass design. And the wire strung down from the back roof, attaching down by the window and then running along the clapboard. A recent addition? Secrets there.

Houses and roads are built. Obvious expressions of people. But the stories are more quiet – less obvious. As Ryden¹ [1993] notes, the invisible landscape. In both Hafford and Val Marie, the [Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve] RLBR and [Grasslands National Park] GNP² are merely another story that people and their landscapes write together. No, they create together. An ongoing collaboration, like it or not.

(Excerpt from my field-journal)

¹ Kent C. Ryden wrote *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, recognising how there are dimensions of landscapes that remain invisible to the natural eye. But they are no less palpable in their effects on our lives. This research is about making visible the “invisible” landscape.

² I refer here to the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve (RLBR) and Grasslands National Park (GNP).

1.1 – Introduction

It's kind of like ... you've got certain things that you like in your community. It's just that you get used to one place, you don't want to leave. It's like an old habit. You can't get rid of these old habits [laugh].

*Diane*³ of Val Marie, SK

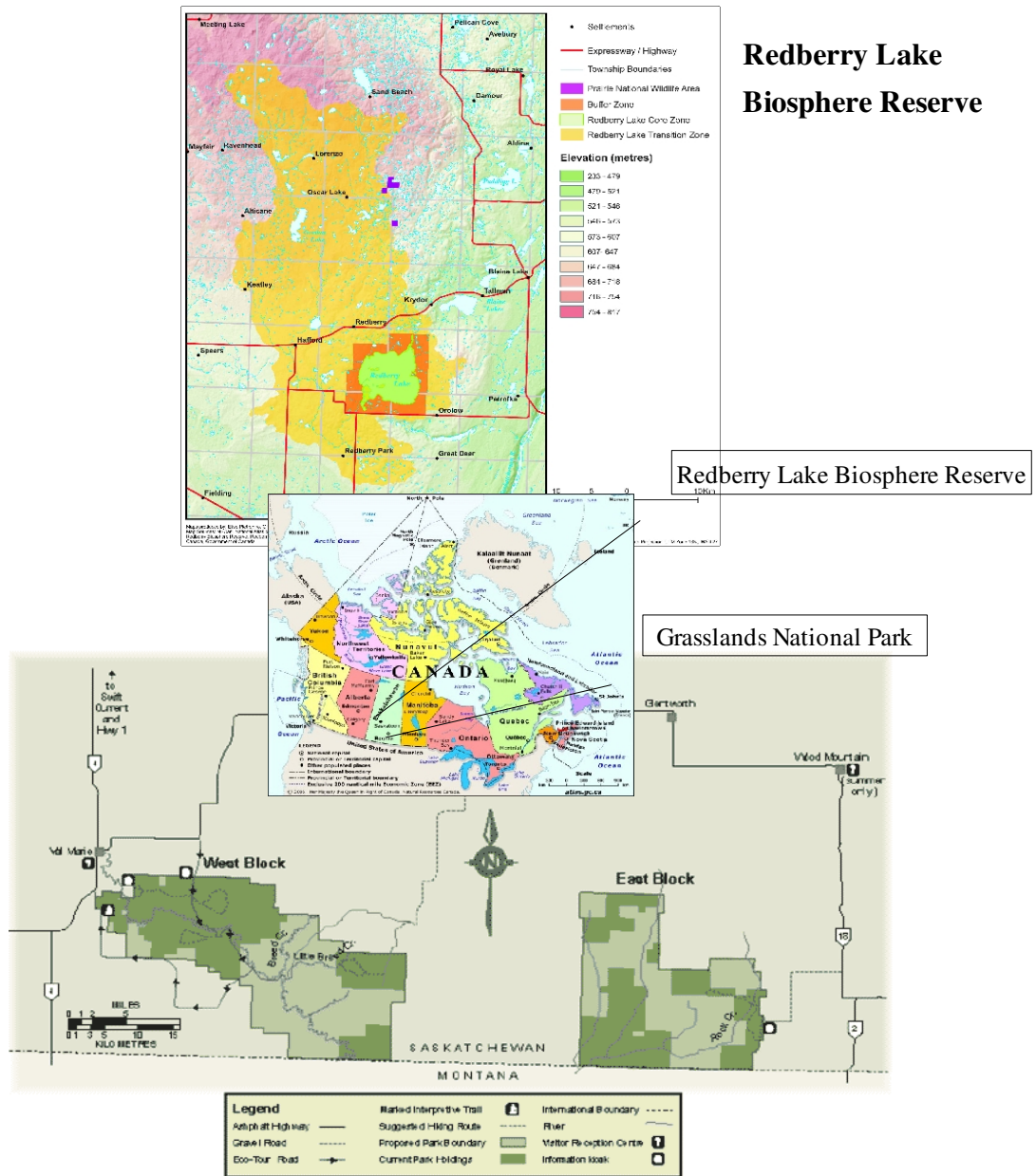
Ooh! This is my home! This-is-my-home. You have no idea. You can't have any idea of what it's like to be living in the house that I was born in. I still hear my mom and dad's voices in the house. Not physically, but talking. Telling me things. That's where I raised my family. I love it.

Audrey of Hafford, SK

“Like an old habit” is how *Diane* in Val Marie, Saskatchewan chose to describe her connections with her rural community. The words of *Audrey* conveyed a similar sentiment – “This is my home,” she emphasised. Like *Diane* and *Audrey*, elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie (Figure 1), two small and rural agricultural communities in Saskatchewan, shared meanings that reflected their relationship with their cultural landscape. In using the term “cultural landscape”, I refer to geographical areas that encompass a variety of interactions between humans and the natural environment.⁴ Using ethnomethodology and influenced by ethnography, the purpose of this research has been to explore the meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with, and in turn, confer upon their cultural landscape. The research question is, how do the elder residents derive and confer meaning regarding their relationship with their cultural landscape? In response to this question, this research has helped to create a portrait of the elder residents, informed by their relationship with their cultural landscape.

³ I am using pseudonyms for the elder residents in Hafford and Val Marie who participated in this dissertation. The names appear in the text in italicised format.

⁴ I discuss cultural landscapes in Section 2.1.



Grasslands National Park

Figure 1: Location of Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve and Grasslands National Park.

Sources of maps:

Canada:

http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/national/can_political_e/referencemap_in

Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve: http://www.redberrylake.ca/Map_of_BR.htm

Grassland National Park: http://www.pc.gc.ca/voyage-travel/pv-vp/itm9-/page9_e.asp.

Alongside meanings that are reflective of connections, such as those of *Diane* and *Audrey*, meanings also indicated a separation from what the men and women with whom I spoke have come to expect as familiar. Furthermore, elder residents also touched on ideas that indicated the important continuity of valued meanings. The connections, separations, and continuity comprise the broad themes that described the meanings that elder residents shared in their narratives.

In exploring the narratives, I have interpreted the meanings of elder residents through the lens of ethics, an approach that takes into account judgements of good, bad, right, and wrong. Elder residents draw on sets of values that are guided by a larger system of beliefs regarding what changes should and should not occur in their cultural landscapes. These values affect how elder residents deliberate on the rightness or wrongness of changes in their cultural landscape. Such deliberations contribute to the meanings elder residents derive from and confer upon their cultural landscape.

This research was designed in light of the changes to the cultural landscapes in and around Hafford and Val Marie and the impacts of these changes on elder residents. As part of the cultural landscape, rural communities in the province of Saskatchewan have undergone social, cultural, and economic changes in recent years. They include changes to health and education services, the out-migration of younger community members in search of economic security, and population ageing. The latter relates to out-migration and refers to the increase in the relative size of individuals over age 65 (Moore and Pacey 2004). More recently, the geographical areas in and around Hafford and Val Marie have witnessed the formation of a protected area and a park, respectively. Hafford is now part of the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve⁵ (RLBR) and Val Marie is the gateway community for Grasslands National Park (GNP) with much of the

⁵ In January of 2000, the United Nations, through its Man and the Biosphere programme, designated Redberry Lake as one of the, at the time of writing, 531 Biosphere Reserves in 105 countries around the world with 15 in Canada (UNESCO 2007).

surrounding landscape currently, or planned to be, within the park.

Consequently, valuable research has studied the impact of changes in these communities regarding service provision and how it has affected elder residents (Cloutier-Fisher and Joseph 2000; Keating 1991). However, the current research takes a different approach. During 2005, I lived for six weeks in both Hafford and then in Val Marie in order to learn of the ideas and perspectives of elder residents. The meanings that are reflected by the ideas and perspectives of elder residents may be harmonious or conflicting. However, in order to understand a cultural landscape as a whole requires exploring its various facets. The present study is one of the only initiatives to focus on these two communities to learn of how elder residents in particular regard their cultural landscape.

Drawing on the work of Paul Cloke and Owain Jones (2001), a cultural landscape is holistic – the whole is greater than the sum of the parts – and a palimpsest. A palimpsest is defined as a “place, experience, etc., in which something new is superimposed over traces of something preceding it” (Barber 2004). Further, a cultural landscape is a geographical area comprised of facets of meaning that are varied – harmonious as well as conflicting – and emerging from past and present experience, memory and imagination. As an integrative concept (Matthews and Herbert 2004), a cultural landscape uniquely offers an extended view – what we see is enhanced by our mind’s eye. It is through our mind’s eye that the elements of memory, imagination, and ideology⁶ come into that view. In particular, memories actively function in the ethics and value judgements that affect how the elder residents have derived meaning from their cultural landscape. Chapter Two offers a more in-depth discussion of a cultural landscape and its role in the current dissertation.

⁶ Asa Berger (1995, 58) notes how “an ideology is a systematic and comprehensive set of ideas relating to and explaining social and political life. Ideologies ‘explain’ to people why things happen and, in so doing, tend to justify the status quo.”

The meanings that have shaped a cultural landscape influence the decisions made regarding the social, cultural, and economic vitality and sustainability⁷ of communities such as those in and around Hafford and Val Marie. Seeking a sustainable future requires comprehension of the past and present relationships that have structured geographical areas,⁸ thus creating a mutable and multifaceted cultural landscape in the process (Antrop 2005).

As demonstrated in the current research, elder residents in rural areas can contribute to the multifaceted nature of a cultural landscape as they have aged in place for decades. Having aged in place, they are able to consider and evaluate current changes in the context of the decades of changes they have witnessed and experienced. Consequently, elder residents possess a unique vantage point from which they contribute to the identity of their living cultural landscape. In so doing, elder residents can help to navigate the path to sustainability for their changing communities.

1.2 – A closer look at changing communities

The communities in and around Hafford and Val Marie are confronting change and locating the path toward a sustainable future. Agriculture has been the longstanding backbone for both areas and changes have included the well known shift from family farms to industrial farm scales, more intensive use of land (Martz 2006) and the related increase in chemical fertiliser use (Boyens 2001). Without relatively large capital inputs for chemical fertiliser, machinery, and increased land, the changes have made agriculture a less feasible occupation or vocation for the

⁷ Although researchers often distinguish the terms, I am using “sustainability” and “sustainable development” interchangeably. As a broad interpretation, sustainable development refers to development that “...meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs....” (Brundtland 1987, 24).

⁸ These geographical areas may include biophysical features such as land, flora, fauna, and human-related features including buildings, roads, gardens, and so on.

generations following the women and men with whom I spoke.

Rural communities have also been contending with changes in service allocation, including the amalgamation of health and education. Out-migration, a clinical-sounding term that disguises the pulse of life it can remove from a community, is a trend the Government of Saskatchewan is working to reverse (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2007). With out-migration and the loss of immediate assistance by family members, elder residents are leaving their homes on farms or ranches and moving into the towns or villages. Such a move improves their access to grocery, medical, and banking services as well as companionship, given the migration of younger members of their families. Consequently, rural communities have undergone a growing demographic of elder residents in Canada (Moore, Rosenberg and McGuinness 1997). The elder women and men living in and around Hafford and Val Marie are part of such a trend (Sian 2001; Kennedy and McMaster 2003).

The overall migration from rural communities such as Hafford and Val Marie is visible in the changing population over the past decades. Table 1.1 demonstrates the shift in population between the census years 1921 and 2006.⁹ The population in Hafford shifted from a peak of 587 in 1966 to 360 in the 2006 Census. Similarly, since 1961 the declining trend in the population of Val Marie has shifted from a high of 443 to 137 recorded in the 2006 Census. Most recently, Hafford experienced a decline in population of 10.2% between 2001 and 2006. The population in Val Marie increased by 2.2% between Census years of 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada 1996; Statistics Canada 2006; Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2006).

⁹ I have only included the populations for the Town of Hafford and Village of Val Marie despite the fact that these cultural landscapes include the surrounding countryside. The changes in Hafford and Val Marie reflect the wider reaching changes affecting these areas as a whole.

YEAR	VAL MARIE	HAFFORD
1921	No data	183
1931	133	329
1941	306	342
1951	357	351
1956	383	453
1961	443	511
1966	385	587
1971	307	580
1976	255	515
1981	240	555
1986	204	533
1991	219	478
1996	157	424
2001	134	401
2006	137	360

Table 1.1: Population trends for the towns of Hafford and Val Marie and the RM of Val Marie (Source: Census of Canada 1951 – Census of Canada 2006).

Such population changes are felt in many rural communities in Saskatchewan due to the social and economic factors touched on above. However, changes associated with being part of the RLBR for Hafford and the GNP for Val Marie add another dimension to the attributes of the cultural landscape.

Given the various social, economic, and cultural changes such as the marginalisation of both youth and elder residents, the RLBR prepared *A Community's Plan for Sustainability*¹⁰. Guided by a vision that states how residents live and work in the RLBR “...under a common banner of equality, dignity, and respect,” the plan stresses how community decision-making is fundamentally democratic (RLBR 2008a). As might be expected, the community plan complements the core philosophy of biosphere reserves – all humans are a fundamental and

¹⁰ This document is a part of *Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Cooperation Plan*.

integral part of biosphere reserves (UNESCO 2002). Therefore, all residents including elder residents, are integral to the RLBR and, as the community plan states, part of community decision-making. Likewise, elder residents in and around Val Marie also contribute an integral facet to the cultural landscape and are fundamental to the community decision-making. Similar to a “biosphere approach” (Nelson 1998, 285), one that balances assorted human and environment interactions, the vision of the GNP also stresses local involvement in the management, protection and presentation of the cultural and natural legacy of the Park.

Despite a consideration of human-environment interactions, the systemic nature of the social, economic, and political aspects of the community is not an official part of the GNP purpose. In contrast to biosphere reserves, national parks acknowledge how a cultural landscape *was* a living cultural landscape at one point. Instead, a living cultural landscape embodies past ways of life that have a continuing relevance today (Parks Canada 2004). However, the value of this attribute is directed toward improving the visitor experience (Parks Canada 2002).

The more integrated approach of biosphere reserves emphasises a living cultural landscape and accords with what the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization¹¹ (UNESCO) defines as a “continuing landscape.” A continuing cultural landscape “... retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time” (UNESCO 2008). During the initial stages of the GNP, some residents welcomed the formation of the park while others felt the proposed park disregarded their way of life (MacEwan 1976).

¹¹ According to UNESCO definitions, cultural landscapes can be one of three designations: 1) “clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man [*sic*]”; 2) organically evolved landscape; 3) associative cultural landscape. If “organically evolved,” the cultural landscape can be considered to be either “relict” or “continuing.” Accordingly, the cultural landscapes in and around Hafford and Val Marie are “continuing” cultural landscapes.

The philosophy that guides the purpose of the GNP helps to explain some of the disparate meanings that elder residents in and around Val Marie derive from their cultural landscape. As Chapter Six discusses further, some of the elder residents in and around Val Marie feel marginalised by changes that include the establishment of the GNP. Somewhat similarly, not all elder residents in and around Hafford have been associated with the formation of RLBR. Therefore, because some elder residents in and around Hafford have had little association with the RLBR, these individuals may not feel they have a role to play in a changing cultural landscape of which the RLBR is prominent.

Therefore, the geographical areas in and around Val Marie and Hafford are facing a similar challenge. In addition to the meanings imparted by the RLBR and GNP that inform community decision-making, those of elder residents are also integral and fundamental facets of the cultural landscape and the decisions that shape it. Along these lines, the UNCED¹² process encompasses care of the environment and a social equity that includes a respect for rural communities and their “accumulated wisdom” (UNESCO 2002, 191). The meanings that elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape draw on their past and reflect part of this “accumulated wisdom.” In this light, this research is designed to bring relief to the meanings that elder residents ultimately contribute to their cultural landscape.

1.3 – Terms of engagement

Some of the terms I have used are pivotal in the following study: elder residents, meaning, ethics, community, relationships, and narratives. Although each sits comfortably within the

¹²United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED “Rio Conference 1992” (German MAB National Committee 2005).

everyday lexicon, the following clarifies how they will function in this dissertation.

The *elder residents* in and around Hafford and Val Marie who comprise the heart of this dissertation included women and men who were either age sixty or over. I have chosen to use the terms “elder resident” or “elder men and women.” Unlike terms such as “senior” or “elderly,” they carry fewer of the connotations that may accompany other terms. For instance, some elder residents who participated in this study shied away from these terms. “Elder” is more closely linked with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Although it is impossible to please all, the terms “elder resident” or “elder men and women” seemed most innocuous.

As a central concept in this dissertation, *meaning* has been widely explored within academia (for example, Bruner 1990; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Jackson 1989). For this dissertation, I am using a broad interpretation of meaning drawn from the work of Roy F. Baumeister (1991) and David Korotkov (1998). Baumeister (1991, 15) defines meaning as “shared mental representations of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, meaning connects things.” The interpretations of David Korotkov (1998) add that meaning hinges on our life making “emotional sense” and demands that what we confront must be perceived and judged to be “worthy of energy investment and commitment” (Korotkov 1998, 55). The idea of ethics is closely tied to the meanings that exist in the relationships between elder residents and their cultural landscape.

Ethics refers to moral judgements that tackle difficult but necessary questions of good, bad, better, worse – how we *should* be and act (Smith 2000). As Paul Roebuck (1999) notes and as I will discuss in Chapter Three, ethics provides a cornerstone for our sources of meaning. As a reflection of their worldviews (Pentikäinen 1997), elder residents employ an ethic with regard to their relationship with their cultural landscape. Paul Roebuck (1999, 21) explains how worldviews “... characterize constructions human beings impose on their world to make sense of it.”

The concept of *community* also features in this research. As a concept, community carries both meaning and a “feel” (Bauman 2004, 1), engendering an affinity with and belonging to various combinations of a group, geographical area, or an idea. The nature of that affinity will vary. Chapter Two clarifies my use of this concept.

Relationships in my research question refers to emotional attachments, whether perceived as positive or negative by the individual in question. Attachments involve geographical areas or places and reflect a sense of place. Sense of place is “profoundly connected to individual human and social processes producing deep emotional connections with specific locations” (Cosgrove 2000, 732). Although I touch on sense of place in Chapter Two, it is subsumed within the emotional attachments that shape the relationships and subsequent meanings elder residents derive from their cultural landscape.

Oral narratives comprise the ideas and perspectives in which meanings are embedded. The narratives of elder residents took the form of stories, narratives or descriptions of a series of events that described and accounted for their experiences (Creswell 2007). In explaining what they have derived from their relationship with their cultural landscape, elder residents touched on their life experiences, society,¹³ and culture. In so doing, they shed light on their worldview and by extension, the values that are linked to their ethics. Chapter Three further discusses how narratives function in this dissertation as well as the circumstances in which the elder residents and I discussed their ideas and perspectives.

¹³ According to Roger Lee (2000,764), society is “...both an identifiable cluster of socially constructed individuals, institutions, relationships, forms of conduct, material and social practices and discourses that are reproduced and reconstituted across time and space, and the condition under which such phenomena are formed.”

1.4 – Some initial words about the writer and this study

1.4.1 – My personal background

This research is a part of my long-standing interest in and fascination with the bond between people and their landscapes. I have been influenced and enriched by previous folklore research focussed on Lake Meshikamau. This lake is a part of Newfoundland and Labrador that contains bountiful and diverse cross-cultural meanings despite having been flooded decades ago during the Churchill Falls hydroelectric dam project. During research on Barraigh (Barra), a small island in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland, I explored the link between the legends and oral histories that animate this part of the world with the physical landscape. During this research, by heeding suggestions such as, “You should go and see ...”, I was often led to the doors of elder men and women. Therefore, my current study has pivoted on the belief that a bond exists, be it positive or negative, with the cultural landscape from which elder residents draw meaning. The geographical areas of Val Marie and Hafford may be thousands of miles from Labrador and even more distant from Barraigh. Much like these places, however, my work in and around Hafford and Val Marie has sought to explore the array of meanings related to landscapes that eyes may similarly *see*, but few hearts and minds may similarly *feel*.

My fieldwork in and around Hafford and Val Marie has been shaped by several elements, some related to where I grew up, and some a function of my ignorance and unfamiliarity with the routines of the areas. I grew up in rural southeastern Ontario where agriculture has played a large role. Although I did not grow up on a farm or ranch, I feel an affinity with the issues concerning rural Canada (my parents have lived for decades in rural Canada and hence, like the elder residents in this dissertation, have also 'aged in place'). Nonetheless, I am a stranger to the routines that have structured the lives of the elder residents who participated in this research.

The timing of my visits also shaped my research. My fieldwork in Hafford was during January when individuals have more time, whether or not they are still actively involved in

agriculture. In contrast, I visited Val Marie during May and June, one of the busiest times of the year for those involved in agriculture. I was ignorant and unaware of the routines in these communities. Therefore, in contrast to Hafford, I needed to allocate more time to speak with elder residents.

My unfamiliarity with Saskatchewan or with life on a farm or ranch helped during my conversations with elder residents. Individuals told me of many routines and ways of life with which I would not be familiar, given my age as well as my background. Some elder residents in Hafford (for many, their families hailed from Eastern or Western Europe) explained certain words or terms as well as festive periods, such as Malanka¹⁴ (Klymasz 1989). Similarly, in Val Marie, individuals told me of how the trees I saw lining the streets were not natural to the grassland where the village is located and had been planted. Finally, although I recognise how I may have been regarded by some elder residents or community members as “stranger,” “outsider,” or “researcher,” I defined myself as an interested visitor and listener.

1.4.2 – Organisation of study

The following chapter reviews the concepts and ideas of previous research that have guided and inspired the current dissertation. Chapter Three goes on to discuss the epistemology, methodology, and methods I have used to study and explore the meanings woven into the texture of ideas and perspectives of the elder residents. By the end of these chapters, the reader will have

14 Malanka is a form of Ukrainian mummary and involved four basic elements of fasting, church-going, feasting and merry-making. The latter involved “not only house-to-house Christmas carolling but mumming practices as well” (Klymasz 1989, 32). As Robert Klymasz (1989, 36) explains, the practice of mumming has declined and nowadays, “Malanka” is “... now used to designate a New Year’s supper dance that takes place on or about January 14th – New Year’s Day according to the old Julian calendar.” This New Year’s celebration is celebrated in Hafford.

an understanding of the background research and methodology that informs this dissertation.

Chapters Four, “Connections: Growing up and taking root,” and Five, “Connections: Home, Community, and the Land,” indicate the meaningful connections between elder residents and their cultural landscape. The question guiding Chapters Four and Five is, “How do the oral narratives indicate how elder residents derive meaning in relation to growing up, working, and making a living in their cultural landscape?” At the end of these chapters, the reader will have learned of the meaningful connections by which elder residents relate to their cultural landscape. These meaningful connections help to shape the ethics of elder residents. Consequently, the reader will gain insight into ethics that inform meanings indicative of separation from the cultural landscape. Knowledge of the connections discussed in Chapters Four and Five are suggestive of the worldviews and ethics that function in the meanings of separation addressed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six, “Separation and Meaning,” focuses on narratives reflective of a separation from the cultural landscape. The meanings indicate the impact of changes related to the agricultural, social, and economic structure of the town and countryside and the formation of the GNP and RLBR. The question guiding this stage of the discussion is, “How do the narratives indicate how elder residents derive meanings that reflect a separation from their cultural landscape?” By the end of this chapter, the reader will better understand meanings that reflect separation from the cultural landscape and also how the ethics of elder residents influence these meanings.

Given meanings reflective of connection and separation, Chapter Seven, “Continuity of Meaning,” addresses how some elder residents seek to continue sources of meanings they have found valuable as part of their own lives. In so doing, the meanings elder residents derive from their landscapes contribute to the nature of the intangible heritage elder residents offer subsequent generations and communities. The question guiding this chapter is, “How do the narratives of elder residents reflect an effort to cultivate the continuation of sources of meanings?” By the end

of this chapter, the reader will better understand how elder residents, informed by meanings discussed in previous chapters, have sought to continue meanings related to aspects of the cultural landscape. In so doing, elder residents contribute to the identity of the cultural landscape.

In summarising the dissertation in the final chapter, Chapter Eight, I discuss some of my own interpretations of the research. Although social and economic changes have covered a wide range of impacts, I focus on the contributions of the RLBR and GNP to the cultural landscape and how these merge with meanings of elder residents. I also discuss how the ethics of elder residents have informed the meanings they derive from their relationships with the cultural landscape yielding an ethical landscape. Continuing on, I offer ideas regarding the significance of this study and where the ideas and perspectives raised by elder residents may go in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The following chapter discusses the previous literature that relates to and illuminates this dissertation. Therefore, I explore aspects of research focussed on cultural landscapes and the geography of ageing. Because the meanings of elder residents touch on the characteristics of their communities, I also explore research that has delved into the idea of community. The RLBR and GNP represent significant changes in the community and the cultural landscape in and around Hafford and Val Marie. Consequently, I provide some background for parks and protected areas in general, and specifically, their link with sustainability and heritage. Both sustainability and heritage correspond with the continuity of meaning that has guided the perspectives of certain elder residents.

After an overall summary, I explore some of the ways the current research bridges gaps in the scholarship. And in order to set the scene, the chapter concludes with a description of the regional and local history for each of the geographical areas.

2.1 – Cultural landscapes

The definition of cultural landscapes used in the current research corresponds with that of UNESCO. According to UNESCO (2008a), cultural landscapes are geographical areas that embrace “a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment. Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a

specific spiritual relation to nature.”

Cultural landscapes are palimpsests and holistic, relying on intangible sources of meaning. The various sources of meaning are borne of individual perspectives that can impart emotional connections to places in the cultural landscape. While perspectives are influenced by time and memory, they are also tied to social, economic, and political forces that in some instances, function as structural constraints. Because meaning can depend on ethical perspectives of the social, economic, and political forces, I end with a section that focusses on the role of ethics in the meanings that animate the cultural landscape.

2.1.1 – Characteristics of the cultural landscape concept

Elder residents, members of the community in general, as well as the RLBR and GNP add to the diversity of meanings in and around Hafford and Val Marie. In an holistic cultural landscape, the diversity of meanings contribute to the identity and “coherency” in the cultural landscape (Antrop 2005, 27). By way of explanation, Antrop (2005, 27) likens the attributes of identity and coherency to an ageing person:

What magnitude of change could cause a landscape to [lose] identity and to become unrecognizable? What processes can break down irreversibly its coherence and continuity? The changes in a living person are an expression of the continuous adaptation needed to function and survive. If not, his life ends. When life ends in landscapes, they become deserts where only physical and chemical forces cause any change.

Therefore, despite physical changes, the coherence of the values and meanings in a cultural landscape hold the key to its identity. In many circumstances, the uniqueness of a cultural landscape relates to the sense of place that impart meaning in a cultural landscape. The identity of a landscape relies on the way an area can be personalised and the degree of its uniqueness (Antrop 1997). The meanings that elder residents derive from the cultural landscape contribute to

this identity. By understanding the identity of a cultural landscape, decision-makers can better understand the transformative changes that may alienate people from their cultural landscape (Antrop 2005). The cultural landscape concept can serve as a link between the various origins, interests, values, and elements that contribute to identity (Plachter and Puhlmann 2005).

By contributing to the identity of the cultural landscape, individuals do not only derive meanings from their cultural landscapes. In turn, they also confer meanings upon their cultural landscape and in so doing, they are actively shaping it. Thus, as the diagram in Figure 2 illustrates below, a reciprocal relationship exists between cultural landscapes and meaning. For instance, Cloke and Jones (2004) argued how the role of trees in addition to people have affected the changes in Arnos Vale, a cemetery in Bristol, England that had become overgrown over the years. Cloke and Jones (2004) do not specifically use the term “cultural landscape,” but their work illustrates the reciprocity of meaning. Individuals have come to derive different meanings from the cemetery. For the owners, the meaning of the area relates to its value as a potential site for residential development. On the other hand, the cemetery has also developed meanings for individuals who value the flora and fauna that have populated the area. The changes (or lack of changes) in the cemetery stem from the meanings individuals confer upon this area.

Therefore, while individuals derive meaning from their cultural landscape, reciprocally, the meanings derived from the cultural landscape have led to certain decisions that have shaped that area. Likewise, in the current research, the elder residents derive meanings from their relationship with the cultural landscape. However, as later chapters will explore, elder residents also confer meanings on the cultural landscape, seeking to actively shape it.



Figure 2: Diagram showing the reciprocal relationship of cultural landscapes and meaning.

The meanings that elder residents share also touch on both tangible and intangible elements in their cultural landscape.¹⁵ As a palimpsest (Huggett and Perkins 2004) of tangible and intangible elements, the ghost of past processes guide interpretations of the cultural landscape (Beaudry 1995; Edmonds 1999). Intangible aspects of a cultural landscape overlay one another in the form of symbol, icon (Cosgrove 1989) and memory (Schama 1995). In and around both Hafford and Val Marie, the cultural landscape has emerged through processes that have included both immigration and agricultural production. Such processes have left tangible reminders of their presence, ones that have become symbolic of the immigration and agricultural history in these areas (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Photograph of the remainders of two structures in the grasslands near Val Marie (Source: Lee Everts).

The tangible and intangible aspects of a cultural landscape also incorporate change over time. Meanings and memories provide an evocative background of reference for contemporary actions (Barrett 1999; Schama 1995). Geographers John Brinckerhoff (J.B.) Jackson (1994) and more recently Paul Cloke and Owain Jones (2001) emphasise how the presence and the conflation of time is inherent in landscape. Cloke and Jones (2001, 652) comment how landscape

¹⁵ The cultural landscape term has been accredited to Carl Sauer (1963) by some to Friedrich Ratzel by others (Jones and Daugstad 1997).

is “ ... where the past and future are co-present with the present – through processes of memory and imagination. Past, present, and future are continuously re-processed while the materiality of landscape is worked by, and marks, this process.” The element of time plays a role in the ideas and perspectives of elder residents. Previous days of farming, ranching, or other experiences are interspersed with present challenges. Later chapters examine how the meanings residents derive from relationships with their cultural landscape are anchored by and juxtaposed with personal and collective memories. These inform the worldviews that help shape perspective, ethical frameworks, and meaning.

Identifying political, economic, and social structures and ideologies emphasises the active role of cultural landscapes. Geographers have explored the contextualising and active role of cultural landscapes by identifying relevant social, economic, and political structures and ideologies (Demeritt 1994; Duncan and Duncan 1988; Duncan 1995; Forbes 2000; Mitchell 1994; Mitchell 2003; Olwig 1996).

As discussed in chapter six, elder residents question the embedded and naturalised meanings and structural constraints related to the loss of wildlife or the overuse of chemical fertiliser and pesticides in agriculture. They respond to the impact of structural constraints and naturalised meanings on their emotional relationships to a place, a relationship often understood as a sense of place.

2.1.2 – Place and sentiment

A “place” is a geographical entity that has become meaningful due to its social, cultural, ideological, or political attributes (Schein 1997; Duncan 2000). In comparison to the cultural landscape concept, place may seem better positioned to capture the meanings that shape everyday life (Cresswell 2003). However, while “the spirit of a place lies in its landscape” (Relph 1976, 30), the spirit of the *landscape* also lies in the places and the emotional connections that lead to a

sense of place.

In the time spent living and working in and around Hafford and Val Marie, elder residents have become acquainted with both positive and negative sentiments that contribute to their sense of place. Whether positive or negative, "... sense of place is profoundly connected to individual human and social processes producing deep emotional connections with specific locations" (Cosgrove 2000, 732). Like other emotional connections, the concept of home can reflect a sense of place that is positive or negative (Cresswell 1996; Manzo 2005; Relph 1976; Tuan 1975). In either case, the meanings of home invigorate places and lend spirit to the cultural landscape (Relph 1976). The search for home is replete with meaning (Atwood 1997) and as the narratives below demonstrate, once the search for home is rewarded, it contributes immeasurably to the meaning elder residents derive from their cultural landscape. In Chapter Six, elder residents share their concerns regarding changes in the cultural landscape and the loss of home, of the comfort, safety and familiarity that is home.

The concept of home also relates to that of dwelling; searching for (and finding) home is equally a search for a place to dwell. In a recent study, Paul Cloke and Owain Jones (2004) used the concept of dwelling to understand the conflicts of use and belief that exist in Arnos Vale, a Victorian cemetery in Bristol. They stated how dwelling might not be a "... cosy, harmonious place-bound, being-in-the-world, but more as an intense, uncomfortable, competitive place-related becoming-in-the-world together" (Cloke and Jones 2004, 339).

The current research borrows and re-applies the above tenet of dwelling. While the meanings that shape an holistic cultural landscape may also be "uncomfortable" and "intense" at times, they contribute to a "becoming-in-the-world together" (Cloke and Jones 2004, 339). Doing so, the diversity of meanings contributes to the coherence and the key to the identity of a cultural landscape (Antrop 2005). Furthermore, these meanings help form the values related to the ethics that people may use to define the world, its organisation, processes and direction, constructions

by which they can judge the relative fullness of their lives (Roebuck 1999).

2.1.3 – Ethical issues

Ethics have come to play an increasing role in geography (Cloke 2002; Proctor 1998; 1999; Sack 1997; Tuan 1989), weaving into research related to “... the systematic study of morality concerned with what it is to make a moral judgement. Moral judgements are evaluative, involving the questions of good, bad, better or worse” (Smith 2000, 231). The concept of moral landscapes addresses the association of landscapes with moral value (Matless 2000). For instance, Gunhild Setten (2004) examined the Jæren district of Norway as a moral landscape and the conflicting perceptions of “naturalness” and morality imparted by farmers and planners. While morals and ethics are sometimes treated synonymously (Smith 2000), Bjørg Lien Hanssen (2001, 247) differentiates the two: “...ethics are the theory or principles, while morals are experiences or practices.” In the current dissertation, I focus on the ethics that function in how elder residents derive meaning in their cultural landscape. The approach to ethics that I use is a form of applied ethics, wherein “... ethical principles or maxims can be applied in real life situations” (Boylan 2001, 1).

Similar to ethical rules, ethical principles develop practically in relation to a larger system of beliefs that point to an “ethical vision” (Smith 2004, 211). The meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape are shaped by their ethical vision. My approach to the ethics that guide the value judgements of elder residents explores how their perspectives relate to the ideas of Peter Singer (1995, 174-5) on living ethically and “to think about things beyond one's own interest” considering the interests of others such as family, friends, and strangers. In this light, the meanings of some elder residents reflect the interests of others such as future generations and the non-human environment.

Similarly, environmental ethics encompasses a range of issues relating to the non-human

environment, deep ecology, and sustainable development. Helping to set the tenor, in “Land Ethic from *A Sand County Almanac*,” Leopold (2005, 164) explains how we should become “citizens” rather than “conquerors” of the land urging “a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land.” Building on this work, recent approaches to the ethics of people and the land advocate an holistic or total land and ecosystem (Armstrong 2006). Such theses move toward a re-conceptualisation of the relationship of humans with the other human and non-human entities of the planet. For some elder residents, the meanings they derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape highlight such a re-conceptualisation. Their meanings hinge on the idea of a unity between the self and the world (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981) or “organic wholeness” of the world (Devall and Sessions 2001, 56). The connection with the world transcends the self.

2.1.4 – Synopsis: Cultural landscapes

A cultural landscape is both holistic and a palimpsest. Further, a cultural landscape is a geographical area comprised of diverse human meanings – harmonious as well as conflicting – emerging from past and present experience, memory, and imagination.

Elder residents derive meanings that incorporate the tangible and intangible elements of their cultural landscape. As discussed in later chapters, changes such as the loss of communities leave tangible remnants on the land that intertwine with intangible meanings forged from personal or collective memories. Meanings may also be reflective of the social and economic structural constraints that relate to a changing agricultural system or the establishment of the RLBR and GNP. The following chapters explore the interaction between meaningful tangible and intangible elements in the cultural landscape.

Made meaningful, various places in the cultural landscape impart a sense of place. The meanings associated with these places weave together, positively and negatively, influencing and

animating the cultural landscape as a whole. For instance, the idea of home carries with it a sensibility and place-ness that can include particular structures and can extend outward into the geographical area.

The meanings of elder residents can be interpreted through the lens of ethics in order to explore the array of meanings that enliven the cultural landscape in and around Hafford and Val Marie. In various ways, the ethics of elder residents reflect the concept of thinking beyond oneself or “living ethically” (Singer 1995, 174). In an holistic cultural landscape, one negotiated in part through ethics, the meanings of elder residents contributes to the overall “becoming-in-the-world together” (Cloke and Jones 2004, 339).

2.2 – Geography of ageing

Examining the factors related to age and ageing can help us to understand their influence on the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape. For instance, cultural, social, and biological factors structure ageing and yield particular models that relate to the various approaches toward ageing. Consequently, researchers have explored and focussed on the influence of such structures and models on the lives of elder residents. However, some researchers have elected to examine and focus on the perspectives of elder residents in light of such structures, models, and the potential constraints of ageing. Finally, in recognition of the value of their perspectives, previous research has also highlighted how elder residents can potentially contribute to a continuity of meaning that accords with the objective of sustainability and civic renewal.

2.2.1 Societal structures and models of ageing

Research has framed the experiences of elder individuals in the context of the societal structures that affect their life experiences (Joseph and Chalmers 1995; Chalmers and Joseph

1998; Pain, Mowl and Talbot 2000; Cloutier-Fisher and Joseph 2000; Joseph and Martin-Matthews 1993; Keating 1991). In the current research, societal structures such as the changes in the services available in Val Marie and Hafford appears in the ideas, perspectives, and meanings of elder residents.

While the idea of ageing or growing ‘older’ may favourably recognise our ‘latter years’, it is accompanied by recent shifts in how ageing or growing older is perceived. These shifts have helped to erode the position of elder persons in Canada and other parts of the world (Blaakilde 1995; Koch 2000). In the hard-hitting (although not always accurate) words of Tom Koch (2000, 3), ageing has become “...a process of obsolescence, of necessary weakness and continued decline.” In fact, ageing is sometimes regarded, however implicitly, as a “problem” in need of a solution (Harper 1997, 183) sought through the magic of modern science or otherwise. In response to the complexity of ageing, researchers distinguish between young-old, middle-old, and old-old (McCracken and Phillips 2005).

The complexity of ageing also exists within identifiable patterns or structures referred to as archetypes, shared models, mythologies, or social constructs (Cole 1986; Gullette 2004; Harper 1997; Moody 1986). In this vein, the structures and models of ageing can be confining. For instance, wisdom has become central in the model of increased age. However, if wisdom refers to “balanced reflection and judgment,” Kathleen Woodward (2003, 56) questions the fairness of assuming the existence of such an attribute in elder individuals. That is, does this assumption impede expressions of anger and frustration at unwelcome changes in society and naturalise silence and acquiescence? Woodward (2003) suggests that as we grow older, we must resist the confining structural constraints that might accompany the contemplative and quiet connotations of ‘wisdom’. Resist the tug of detachment from life. Accept the right to be angry, frustrated, fervent and indeed, honest about life.

2.2.2 – Perspectives and ageing

Research has also explored how individuals relate to their surroundings and by extension, the societal structures that may impinge on this relationship (Kearns and Andrews 2005). By questioning and examining structures such as archetypes or shared models, researchers underscore the perspective, experience, and expertise of elder women and men (Hufford, Hunt, and Zeitlin 1987; Morris 2002; Mullen 1992; Shenk 1998). Decades ago, notable humanistic geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1976, 275) encouraged researchers to understand and *listen* to how “people’s response to physical setting is mediated by culture, which is so much a part of day-to-day living” (1976, 275).

In this spirit, *Number Our Days* by Barbara Myerhoff (1979) is a critical and sensitive ethnography of members of the “Aliyah Senior Citizens’ Center” in Venice, California. This work highlights the perspectives of residents, adding insight to existing cultural, social, and biological elements and constraints. Men and women such as Shmuel, Jacob, and Hannah embroider elements of their memories into meaningful shapes for themselves as well as for the reader. Myerhoff (1978, 219) shares her thoughts on Jacob:

He knew how to intensify the present, how to deepen his satisfaction in small rewards and pleasures, how to bring the past into his life for the continuity that gave it intrinsic meaning; yet he never remained fixed on the past nor used it as a negative standard in terms of which to view the present.

The idea of memory and time is essential in this dissertation. The individuals with whom I spoke echo the sentiments of people such as Jacob in terms of their relationship with their cultural landscape – remembering the past while maintaining the integrity of the present.

Research from a range of disciplines has recognised the intrinsic value of memory and perception in the well-being of an individual (Sherman 1991; Shuldiner 1994; Montbriand 2004; Lin, Dai, and Hwang 2003). As already mentioned, the meanings of elder residents in and around Val Marie and Hafford relate to the concepts of time and memory and in particular, to the

concept of re-membering. Re-membering is defined as “...an intense form of remembering that calls attention to the reaggregation of members, the figures who belong to one’s life story, one’s own prior selves, as well as significant others who are part of the story” (Cattell 2002, 84). The concept of “experiential place integration” works alongside re-membering (Rowles and Ravdal 2002, 88) and refers to the “physical intimacy, social immersion, and autobiographical memory” that reflects a “blending of place and self within an overall sense of being in place” (Rowles and Ravdal 2002, 88).

Alongside the work of Myerhoff (1979), Graham Rowles (1978) completed *Prisoners of Space?* This poignant ethnography critically and empathetically interpreted the experiences of elder residents in their environment based on their perspective. *Prisoners of Space?* explores how the lives of five men and women in Chicago reflect their relationship with space – their homes, neighbourhood, and beyond. Despite a physical constriction of their world, the elder individuals featured in *Prisoners of Space?* do not always experience a corresponding psychological retreat (Rowles 1978). The current study also relied on the different and diverse perspectives of elder residents. Similarly, the meanings intimated by the ideas and perspectives of elder residents do not reflect a psychological retreat and instead point to an engagement with their cultural landscape.

2.2.3 – Contributions of ageing

Recalling the ideas of Marc Antrop (2005), the meanings of elder residents contribute to the identity of the cultural landscape, an attribute that can assist in decisions regarding the future of the community. Leila Shotten (2003, 11) explains that “... elderly people have witnessed changes both for the better and for the worse, so consulting them makes eminent sense.” In this manner, the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape may be sources of meanings for their communities. Therefore, the value of elder residents can potentially translate

into a contribution to civic renewal and community improvement (Freedman 1997; Liu and Besser 2003).

However diverse or discordant, the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape contribute to a continuity of meaning that accords with the sustainability. Ensuring a continuity of meaning and sustainability in particular, pivots on preserving “the natural foundations of life for future generations” (Plachter, Kruse-Graumann, and Schulz 2005, 14). Several researchers have studied the link between elder residents and sustainability or environmentalism (Ekstrom, Ingman and Benjamin 1999; Wright, Caserta, and Lund 2003; and Wright and Lund 2000) asserting that concerns related to sustainability naturally merge with issues of legacy and stewardship (Wright, Caserta, and Lund 2003). As later chapters discuss, ethical principles impassion the words and meanings of several elder residents in this research, periodically reinforcing their commitment to the sustainability of the cultural landscape.

2.2.4 – Synopsis: Geography of ageing

As previous research has examined, the idea of ageing can be affected by changing models and structures. Therefore, for this research, it will be assumed that elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie contend with the changes in their cultural landscape alongside these pervasive structures and models of ageing. Changes include those regarding health services, agriculture, and the formation of the RLBR and GNP exist in and around Hafford and Val Marie.

Exploring ageing from the perspectives of elder residents (Rowles 1978; Myerhoff 1979), researchers such as Barbara Myerhoff (1979) and Marie Cattell (2002) have used the concept of “re-membering.” In the present work, this concept arises in the ideas, perspectives, and related meanings that elder residents locate in their cultural landscape.

As noted above, such meanings also draw on and inform the ethics of elder residents. The resultant meanings help to define the identity of the cultural landscape with elder residents

contributing to the civic renewal and sustainability of its different significant attributes. The communities of elder residents represent one of those attributes.

2.3 – Communities: Value and sustainability

The concept of community is richly diverse; groups and individuals can belong to several distinct or overlapping communities. The articulations of community may not be easily defined, but people seem to know it when they see or feel it (Fitchen 1991; Bauman 2001). While a community may be associated with a place or locality, it can also carry a deeper meaning. An individual or a group can have a symbolic sense of the community and sense of belonging to a place, to its institutions, and with its people (Fitchen 1991).

Maureen Reed (2003, 7) highlights elements such as the related ideas of “territory, attachment and interest.” As the following chapters will show, this approach captures some of the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape. For instance, the idea of a territory can be harnessed by tangible features such as rivers or a coastline, and complemented by an intangible “feel” of familiarity. Some residents express a sense of belonging to a community – “attachment” to their part of the province or the prairie – through knowledge of their “territory.” Their attachment sometimes results in membership to a community that shares an “interest” in a particular issue or concern. The articulations between the different aspects of community also blur the division between the known and immediate community and that of the imagined community.¹⁶

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) refers to the idea that we can be linked together to form a community despite lacking face-to-face interaction with the majority of people comprising that community. He explains, “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”

Janet Fitchen (1991) sheds additional light onto the intangible bonds that help define the idea of being in and belonging to a community. Fitchen (1991) refers to qualities such as uniqueness, egalitarianism, familiarity, family oriented, and place of security that people in her study used to characterise their communities. Likewise, these qualities feature in the narratives of elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie.

The idea of ‘them’ and ‘us’ also helps to define community. Communication within a community strengthens the bonds between individuals and groups, thus creating a sense of “us” in contrast to “them,” those beyond the community. However, the identification of “us” and “them” has shifted as the reach of communication changed with technology over the twentieth century. While communication had been primarily within the community, thus reinforcing a sense of “us,” technology increasingly permitted communication beyond the community, thereby shifting its contours to include groups and individuals formerly identified as “them” (Bauman 2001).

Perspectives concerning the relation of rural to urban also help to define community. Some maintain that urban areas are the economic drivers in Western Canada and hence, in contrast to rural areas, they are more worthy of limited financial resources (Gibbins 2003). By predominantly stressing the value of the economy, this particular stance corresponds with what John McMurtry (1998, 24) calls the “money ground” of value. Therefore, the pursuit of increasing monetary profit solely guides values and the actions that stem from those values. In contrast, a “life-code” of value hinges on means of life that include clean air, food, water, shelter, or affective interaction (McMurtry 1998, 298). Pursuing the intrinsic value of money and profit are not included in such a value system. Together, people ensure a life-code of value in order to protect and further life, distinct from the decrees of values rested primarily on money (McMurtry 1998).

These words and ideas accompany the chorus of voices that regard local knowledge as

pivotal in building and developing community and cultural identity (Averill 2003; Bird 2002; Colasurdo 2000). In particular, Marcia Nozick (1999, 5) explains how communities are worth preserving, as they are “... grounded both in the life experiences of people who live in them and in the natural histories of specific regions. This calls for the revival of local culture and the meeting of people’s needs.”

Given their ideas and perspectives, meanings that elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie derive from their cultural landscape can contribute to the characteristics, development, and sustainability of their community. The objective of sustainability corresponds with recent formation of the RLBR and GNP.

2.4 – Parks, protected areas, and heritage

2.4.1 – Formation of RLBR and GNP

The recent formation of the RLBR and GNP contribute to the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of the area in and around Hafford and Val Marie and may also be significant in the meanings elder residents derive from their cultural landscapes.

RLBR was internationally designated on the 21 January, 2000 as part of the UNESCO, Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme. As a biosphere reserve, it is a compilation of cultural and natural landscapes, with certain areas within each region designated for nature conservation and others that are managed to model sustainability (Matsuura 2005). Redberry Lake is a uniquely closed watershed and lies within the aspen parkland eco-region, a part of the temperate grassland (RLBR 2008b). Like other biosphere reserves, the RLBR consists of core, buffer, and transition areas (Figure 4). The saline water body of Redberry Lake and its small islands serve as the habitat for several endangered, threatened, or rare species of bird (for example, the American White Pelican, piping plover, double-crested cormorant, and the white-winged scoter) and for this reason it has been designated as the core area of the RLBR (RLBR 2008b). The buffer and

transition areas of the RLBR are comprised of grasslands, aspen groves, grazing pastures, and cultivated agricultural land. The town of Hafford sits within the transition zone of the RLBR.

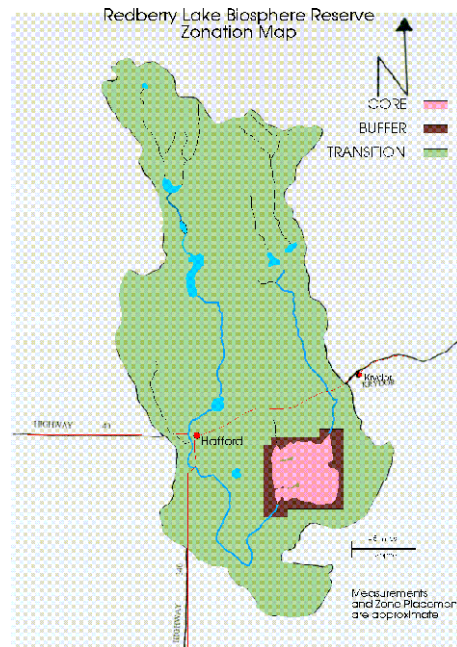


Figure 4: Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve showing the core, buffer, and transition areas (Source: Sian 2001).

All components of the RLBR encapsulate the three primary functions of biosphere reserves: conservation of species, ecosystems, and landscapes; sustainable human and economic development; and logistic support through such activities as education, monitoring, and research (RLBR 2008b). Prior to the formation of the RLBR, these primary functions were taking place to a limited degree. In particular, the conservation function of the RLBR emerged from the existing work being conducted through The Redberry Lake Pelican Project (Canada) Foundation (RPP). Activities such as ecotourism or the existence of a park area for visitors coincided with the human and economic development function. Additionally, while agriculture has remained central in the economy, the commitment of residents to the function of conservation and the protection of

the lake had become apparent with the passing of municipal legislation that restricted industrial-style livestock operations in the transition area (RLBR 2008b). Finally, the logistical support function had been provided through the RPP in the form of limited monitoring of the lake and bird colonies, the coordination of development, visitor management, and research activities (RLBR 2008b). Therefore, the designation of the RLBR has recognised and formalised existing activities within the region. In so doing, the RLBR has been able to advance the activities that accord with the three main functions of biosphere reserves.

In Canada, since the 1960s, a national plan was created to ensure that every natural region is represented by a National Park (Nelson 1998). Therefore, in order to protect the natural region of “Prairie Grasslands”¹⁷ in the Canadian Park system, a memorandum of agreement was signed in 1975, beginning the slow accrual of land for the GNP (Dearden 2004, 317). In 1988, an agreement between the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan replaced an earlier 1981 agreement identifying an approximate 900 square kilometre area that the GNP will eventually cover (Parks Canada 2005). Since its inception, the formation of the park has relied on purchases by the Government of Canada on a “willing-seller/willing buyer” basis with Parks Canada emphasising that there will be no expropriation of land (Parks Canada 2005).

But unlike the establishment of the RLBR, that of the GNP has, at times, been more acrimonious (MacEwan 1976). In the summer of 1975, a joint Federal-Provincial Grasslands Committee was formed with part of their objective being to hold public information hearings in several communities including Val Marie. A spectrum of perspectives were aired, ranging from total support to total opposition for the park.

Participants, in general, expressed a desire for conservation of the cultural and natural heritage of the region. However, certain perspectives pointed to how, despite the love of land expressed by those involved in agriculture, the actions and needs of ranchers and farmers may

¹⁷ This is drawn from “Figure 11.1 Terrestrial System Plan for Parks Canada” (Dearden 2004).

periodically conflict with the importance of protecting particular species of indigenous flora and fauna. Hence, there was a need for a park body whose primary objective was the protection and conservation of flora and fauna.

Other sentiments rejected the protection of the land by an outside body, with one comment during the hearings referring to how the park will create “ ‘an empire dominated by prairie dogs and rattlesnakes’ and directed by Ottawa civil servants ‘with no real and basic love of the land’ ” (MacEwan 1976, 34). Participants in the hearings also spoke of the reluctance of tourism, as a large number of tourists could potentially destroy what the park is intended to protect. These individuals did not explicitly reject the creation of a park, but instead, they sought for it to not to be promoted as a tourist destination similar to Banff or Jasper National Parks in Alberta.

Undoubtedly, the issues and values related to the GNP have been complex. During its early stages of formation, the report of the hearings accurately concluded that the park proposal has caused “bitter community cleavages” (MacEwan 1976, 64). As the following discussion explores, some of the above sentiments remain present in the meanings of elder residents. Here again, like the cultural landscape in and around Hafford, the uncomfortable and intense feelings that signify diverse values contribute to the identity and meanings that comprise cultural landscapes and the “becoming-in-the-world together” (Cloke and Jones 2004, 339).

2.4.2 – Sustainability and heritage

Both National Parks in Canada and Biosphere Reserves incorporate the concept of sustainability.¹⁸ In accordance with the *Canada National Parks Act*, the stated purpose of the

¹⁸ This concept was established as part of Agenda 21 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2005), a programme and strategy for sustainable development prepared at the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro, 1992 (Mitchell 2004; Walter, Precht, and Preyer 2005).

GNP has been “to encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park’s natural and cultural heritage values, in ways that leave them unimpaired for future generations” (Parks Canada 2002, 1). For Biosphere Reserves, sustainable development has been characterised by an interdisciplinarity that affects society equally and comprises a “... future-oriented emphasis with responsibility for future generations” (Plachter, Kruse-Graumann and Schulz 2005, 16). As later chapters demonstrate, the various meanings that elder residents attribute to their cultural landscapes lend weight to the concept of sustainability.

To recognise and include the various meanings in parks and protected areas, the cultural landscape concept was adopted by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention¹⁹ (Rössler 2006; Plachter and Puhlmann 2005) and Parks Canada (Parks Canada 2006). As components of a cultural landscape, parks and protected areas necessarily act as meeting places for numerous tangible and intangible values (Harmon and Putney 2003).

The borders of these meeting places are contingent upon a variety of tangible and intangible values. And value depends on the perspective of the assessor. Consequently, Barbara Morehouse (1996, 7) uses different conceptualisations of space: “absolute,” “relative,” and “representational” space. Absolute space is physically bounded by walls, different ecological zones, or political boundaries of a Park. “Relative” space refers to the mutable boundaries that depend on a land use. Since the boundary of a space relies on how it is conceived, the idea of “representational” space addresses how boundaries can change depending on intangibles such as symbol or history. The same space can be valued and meaningful as home, a natural “get-away” for a tourist, a beautiful vista, a source of biodiversity, or somehow, all of the above. Representational space is of particular relevance for the current dissertation.

Despite the mutability of these boundaries, the meanings and values that shape

19 Again, it is the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme that designates Biosphere Reserves.

representational spaces emerge from a knowledge of, and the links among the past, present, and future. It is important to recognise that elements of past landscapes – buildings or other structures – sometimes encapsulate meanings relevant in the present and potentially the future (Antrop 2005). Similarly, structures that are palpable in memory are also valuable. In this light, the associated meanings can contribute to decisions regarding cultural landscapes, in particular. The facets of meaning that elder residents contribute to the cultural landscape hinge on acknowledging the inherent links among the past, present, and future.

For elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie, sources of meaning may be indicative of connections with and separation from the cultural landscape that inform meanings they seek to continue. In seeking a continuity of meaning, elder residents hearken to actions and values held by previous generations. As noted by Georges Condominas (2004, 21):

In many prayers, and in agrarian and other rites, you will hear ‘I am doing this as my ancestors did before me’, a justification of the present with reference to the past but also to ensure development in the future. Everything is linked, from the past to the future.

Collectively, the diverse sources of meaning as well as the deliberations shaped by the ethics of elder residents contribute to the identity of the cultural landscape. As such, the ideas and perspectives that shape the sources of meanings expressed by elder residents are a form of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). In recent years, UNESCO (2003, 2) has developed a set of guidelines by which countries can identify and recognise ICH:

Intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

ICH brings within its compass elements of the meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with their cultural landscape: reliance on generation to generation transmittance; re-creation; interaction with history; knowledge; and a sense of continuity. Inherent in the meanings of elder residents and their function in heritage is the link between the past, present, and future.

2.5 – Overall synopsis

The identity of the cultural landscape arises from various interrelated meanings. The meanings of elder residents animate the cultural landscape alongside those of other members of the community such as younger residents. Furthermore, the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape draw on those of their forebears. In turn, the meanings of elder residents contribute to those of other current and subsequent community members. Collectively, the meanings over time create the palimpsest of meanings that help to shape the identity of the cultural landscape.

Meanings pivot on the interwoven meanings of tangible and intangible elements of the cultural landscape. In this manner, meanings relate to the experiences of elder residents in terms of their idea of home or community in addition to the changes in their cultural landscape. As already mentioned, changes include those to service provision, the method of agricultural production, or the formation of the RLBR and GNP. Elder residents may feel an emotional connection to various places within the cultural landscape. The interwoven tangible and intangible elements may lead to a sense of place or a “sense of being in place” (Rowles and Ravdal 2002, 88).

However, meaning also emerges from the assessments that individuals make regarding the rightness or wrongness of their changing cultural landscape. Consequently, the meanings of elder residents characterise their value judgements that relate to their ethics. As noted above, characteristic of cultural landscapes, such meanings may harbour an intensity and uneasiness that

accompanies different perspectives. Regardless, in their deliberations, elder residents contribute to the identity of their cultural landscape.

Moreover, whether emerging from memories of growing up, their early life, or articulated by ethics and associated value judgements that deem current changes to be right or wrong, the meanings of elder residents are a form of intangible heritage. As noted by Condominas (2004) above, as sources of heritage, the meanings of elder residents can offer justification (and explanation) for the present with reference to the past.

2.6 – Bridging the gaps

This dissertation complements and links areas of scholarship that include cultural landscapes, geography of ageing, community, and parks and protected areas. Previous research has pointed to the value of the knowledge of elder residents given the effects of social and economic changes on their lives. Drawing on this previous research, the current work focusses particularly on elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie. As such, this work explores meanings that have been affected by changes such as those in service provision, agricultural production, and the establishment of the RLBR and the GNP.

Following previous research that highlights perspective as a source of knowledge, the current research relies on the perspectives of elder residents in and around Val Marie and Hafford to learn of meanings that shape their relationship with their cultural landscape. In focussing on elder residents, the research helps to advance the social and cultural understanding of these geographical areas.

The current research also brings together literature associated with ethics to further inform the areas of scholarship for cultural landscapes and geography of ageing. The meanings of elder residents are influenced by ethics; the subsequent meanings that animate the cultural landscape.

As noted above, the structure and models of ageing may encourage elder residents to

acquiesce to the social and economic changes, relegating them to the margins of society. However, it is also possible that elder residents are not acquiescing to the changes in their cultural landscape. As coming chapters explore, elder residents may resist some of the social and economic changes contributing to the potential decline of their communities. Again, cultural landscapes are holistic. Thus, the response of elder residents to such changes, and the resultant meanings, join other sources of meaning to shape the changing cultural landscape and its identity.

The formation of the RLBR and the GNP contributes to the changing cultural landscape in and around Hafford and Val Marie, respectively. The intentions of parks and protected areas such as the RLBR and GNP harmonise with the perspectives of various groups and individuals, including elder residents. Both parks and protected areas work toward sustaining and maintaining cultural and natural heritage for future generations (Matsuura 2005; Department of Justice 1998). As knowledge or a sense of continuity (two attributes of ICH), the meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with their cultural landscapes represent ICH and contribute to the identity of that cultural landscape. Moreover, the heritage of elder residents can inform decisions related to the future development of the communities of the cultural landscape.

2.7 – History and culture

The meanings that elder residents have shared in this dissertation are part of both the regional and local history of the respective geographical areas. In order to contextualise the meanings of elder residents, the following offers a summary of attributes that texture the history of the regions in addition to attributes of the local history in and around Hafford and Val Marie.

2.7.1 – Regional history

After the transfer of lands from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870, the landscape in Saskatchewan began to transform dramatically at the behest of the Dominion Government of

Canada (Stabler and Olfert 2002). At this time, agreements concerning the commodities of fish, flour, timber, and wheat played a part in changes that began as early as the 1840s (Warnock 2004). On the 7 March, 1878, Sir John A. Macdonald, the Prime Minister under whose watch the country began to chug and grind to a start, spoke of a “National Policy” (Warnock 2004, 123):

The National Policy was a plan to create a country linked east to west by transportation, communications and a separate market for investment and the sale of goods.

Saskatchewan was created by people who were endeavouring to create a country independent of the United States.

A swirl of agreements evolved from a battery of subsequent policies that guided tariffs, railway, land, and immigration (Widdis 1992). Settlement eventually led to the incorporation of communities such as Hafford and Val Marie.

The latter part of the 19th century was characterised by a single-minded drive of immigration (Widdis 1992). As part of the intensive advertising and campaigning to draw settlers, immigration policies favoured those from the United States and Europe, especially Great Britain (Waiser 2005). When initial results did not meet expectations, immigration officers sought prospective settlers from the steppes of Eastern Europe, including Ukrainians, Polish, Mennonites, Doukhobors, and Hutterites (Bantjes 2005; Lehr 1982).

In the relatively short span between 1871 and 1877, seven numbered treaties were signed with the First Nations of the Canadian Prairies, assigning these groups to small reserves. The way was clear now for the Dominion government to ease the transition into their vision of agriculture (Warnock 2004). The idea of settlement and development and the vision of agriculture was steeped in a European pastoral aesthetic: “By invoking it, writers offered the prairies not so much for what they were as what they would become” (Bantjes 2005, 19).

Given the above goal of transforming the Prairie and ushering in the “Golden Age” of ranching, large cattle-based operations moved north from the United States in the latter part of the 19th century (Foran 2004; Loveridge and Potyondi 1983). Controlled by “elite” owners, the

ranching operations neglected the “grass-roots of society” (Elofson 2000, xvi), failing to recognise the contribution of the cowboys who confronted the challenges of the natural environment (Elofson 2000, xvi). Similar to the cowboys of these early ranches, the meanings of some elder residents near Val Marie reflect the need to acknowledge the unique nuances of the land. As *Scott* explains in a later chapter, it is a “harsh country.”

For the homesteaders who sought a new life in and around areas such as Hafford and Val Marie, it was also a touch-and-go existence. The aim was to secure the sought-after 160 acres or a ‘patent’ – a quarter section of hope and future. This was purchased for ten dollars and the promise that, three years hence, homesteaders would have lived on the land for six months in each year, erected a shelter and cultivated at least fifteen acres (Waiser 2005). In Chapter Five, *Lilian* refers to the need of forebears to “prove up” their land, referring to the need to cultivate a certain amount within a specified time. In the first year that Saskatchewan had entered the Confederation, some settlers accepted land abandoned by others who had relinquished hopes of eking out a living from the poor quality land (Waiser 2005).

In this light, the quality of the land and its value in making a living must be placed alongside the value of ownership. Edna Tyson Parson (1981, 2) adds some insight to the issue of ownership in *Land I Can Own*, a sensitive biography and memoir for her father, Anthony Tyson:

This is the story of his struggles, frustration and triumphs and also of the people whose lives touched upon his in similar struggles to establish homes on a new land where it is possible to sign a document, fulfil a contract and actually own land upon which they laboured. In most of the lands from which the pioneers came this would not be possible.

Her words signify sentiments that some of the elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie, or their forebears, may have felt.

Once farmers and ranchers had settled, transportation and communication was critical to their success. Following in the footsteps of early trails, such as the Saskatchewan Trail, (also know as the Carlton Trail), the railway took up the torch of development. Hence, by 1884, the

Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) had established small farms in the southern Saskatchewan to identify the best crops and practices for homesteaders to use in this part of the Palliser Triangle²⁰(Estey 1997). Beginning in 1905, the CPR functioned in agricultural education, providing railcars known as “Better Farming Trains” that focussed on themes relevant to settler families: livestock, crop production, dairy, “household science,” and “boys and girls” (Estey 1997, 36).

Forming a vast interlace of iron, the railway ensured farms could access the international market (Stabler and Olfert 2002; Waiser 2005). Pivotal in the settlement of communities, the railway became synonymous with the development of Canada.

2.7.2 – Local history

The local history of the Hafford region rubs shoulders with notable and legendary figures from fur trade history. The community history for the Hafford region, *Walk Down Memory Lane*, mentions how Alexander Henry and David Thompson noted the “Red Berry Hills” in their journals (Historical Society of Hafford 1983, 1). Over a few centuries, the name “Red Berry” has become inscribed onto the map and mind, as it came to define Redberry Lake and now, the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme designation of the RLBR in January 2000.

As part of the RLBR, the community of Hafford lies within a natural environment

20 As Barry Potyondi (1995, 39) explains, between 1857 and 1860, John Palliser led an expedition supported by the Royal Geographical Society and the British Government. The intention was to explore and assess the region extending from the Red River Settlement to the Pacific Coast. This coincided with another expedition led by Simon J. Dawson and Henry Youle Hind. As part of his assessments, Palliser defined a “fertile belt” between the Red River Settlement that roughly followed the North Saskatchewan River to the Rocky Mountain foothills. Below this fertile belt, he identified a triangular tract consisting of “... ‘arid plains,’ whose dry climate, sandy soil, and extensive grass cover proclaimed a future based in cattle grazing – Palliser’s famous triangle.”

distinguished by seasonal ponds and marshes, and aspen and shrub groves (RLBR 2008b). Since the settlement of individuals from Europe, other parts of Canada, and the United States, agriculture has been predominant in the economy. Agriculture has included grain farming, mixed farming, cattle grazing, and sheep grazing.

Established as a grain transportation point on the railway, the community of Hafford was incorporated as a town in the early twentieth century (RLBR 2008b). The pages of *A Walk Down Memory Lane* speak of the abundant assortment of businesses that have opened and sometimes closed their doors along Main Street. However, a pharmacy remains as well as the hotel, K-Bar, which has also stood the test of time. All but one of the grocery stores has since closed its doors.

In Hafford, the first hospital was moved with the newer one now being changed to a health centre with fewer services. While I was in Hafford, the newly amalgamated Prince Albert Health Region held a well-attended meeting to explain the changes. The meeting featured critical words of dissent, indicating how the ongoing changes are unwelcome to attending residents. The health centre, predominantly focussed on providing homes for elder residents who can no longer care for themselves, is a cutting symbol of the changes imposed on the town.

Despite these changes and loss of health services, other aspects of the town continue. For instance, the town celebrates part of its heritage with several festivals such as Malanka, a festival I mentioned earlier, as well as events such as the Ukrainian Dance Festival and Music Festival held annually in March.

Like Hafford and its surrounding area, the local history in and around Val Marie also boasts its share of places and names that have been inked onto maps of meaning. The region is governed by the Great Plains of North America and distinguished by characteristics of rolling hills, wide areas of grassland and few forests, and a semi-arid climate (Parks Canada 2002). Amidst this environment, vestiges of the “Golden Age” of ranching are conjured with names such as the ‘Turkey Track’ or the ‘76’ Ranch. Within the rolling hills, badlands, and grassland,

agriculture remains the core local industry, governed by ranching and dryland farming (Parks Canada 2002).

In the community of Val Marie, the streets are defined by gateposts adorned with the cattle brands of local ranches. In the area around Val Marie, the trail of the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP), who have played a role in the identity of the area, is also commemorated (Mason 1993) (Figure 5). Preceding and remaining as equal testament to their presence in the cultural landscape are the tent rings of First Nations (Figure 6).



Figure 5: Photograph of a sign noting the NWMP trail (left) and cattle brands on signposts in Val Marie (right) (Source: Lee Everts).



Figure 6: First Nation tent rings in southern Saskatchewan (Source: Lee Everts).

Social and economic changes have had an impact on the areas in and around Val Marie and Hafford. The ideas and perspectives of elder residents in coming chapters describe the meanings related to losing symbols of progress and improvement such as businesses in their communities, grain elevators, and the railway. As the following chapters explore, the memory of these structures is etched in the cultural landscape and feature in the meanings of elder residents despite and due to their absence.

In an effort to explore the particular meanings ingrained in the ideas and perspectives of elder residents, I have relied on several methods and methodologies. A discussion of methodology is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 – Foundations of research

Preceding a discussion of the methods I used to undertake my analysis, the following discloses the epistemological and methodological foundations of this study and in relation, meaning and ethics.

3.1.1 – Epistemology and methodology

Given my aim to describe the meanings that elder residents derive from their relationships with their cultural landscape, this dissertation relied on the ideas and perspectives of elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie. Researchers have long scrutinised the traditions and theories of knowledge and epistemology (Gergen 1999; Lincoln and Guba 2005; Schwandt 1998).

The unifying thread that has centred my research is drawn from the epistemology of constructivism and more particularly, the tenets of social constructionism. Constructivism holds that “...what we take as objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective” (Schwandt 1998, 236). Although sometimes conflated, social constructionism is a form of constructivism that postulates, “... we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth” (Schwandt 2000, 198).

Under the aegis of this epistemology, my work has relied on ethnomethodology and been influenced by ethnography in an effort to tug at the threads of meaning that elder residents shared

with me. Ethnography focuses on describing the shape or portrait of a culture expressed by an individual or a group, whereas ethnomethodology focuses on the method by which individuals or groups order their world. Pollner and Emerson (2001, 126) refer to earlier work of Zimmerman and Weider (1970) and explain “how members of a society go about the task of seeing, describing and explaining order in the world in which they live.”

Bearing this in mind, the study of ethnography focuses on a cultural group (or a social group within that group) and is based primarily on observations and a prolonged period of time spent listening and experiencing within that particular culture (Creswell 1998). As Kevin McHugh (2000, 75) explains, ethnographers “...serve as lenses, selecting and interpreting ‘scenes’ and ‘scripts’ – so called thick description – into larger interpretive wholes that inform and illuminate culture.”

The concept of culture is wide-ranging in application, from a way of life such as agriculture to the beliefs that influence such ways of life (Berger 1995; Briggs 1992). As such, the definition of culture I am using is sufficiently broad to encompass both tangible and intangible expressions: “the way of life of a people, including their attitudes, values, beliefs, arts, sciences, modes of perception, and habits of thought and activity” (Blackburn 2005). What Kevin McHugh (2000) and others emphasise is how we can rely on the descriptions that individuals give related to their lives in order to understand the larger whole. This holistic approach contributes to my aim of learning how the ideas and perspectives of the individual residents, and the meanings these imply, help to shape their cultural landscape.

Given this objective, I also drew on ethnomethodology, the objective of which is to “... determine the principles and mechanisms by means of which actors, in their action, produce the meaningful structure and ordering of what is happening around them and what they express and do in social interaction with others” (Bergmann 2004, 72). Furthermore, this methodology seeks to “... render the familiar strange in order to expose the common-sense understandings and

practical reasoning that sustain local social orderings” (Smith 2000, 239). In the spirit of social constructionism and drawing primarily on ethnomethodology, I have explored the ideas and perspectives of residents in an effort to mutually arrive, with the residents, at an understanding of their relationship with the cultural landscape.

The concept of a worldview consists of the “values, norms and sources of meaning” (Roebuck 1999, 21) and provides the “principles and mechanisms” noted above by Bergmann (2004, 72). As Paul Roebuck (1999, 21) explains above, worldviews “... characterize constructions human beings impose on their world to make sense of it.” “Making sense” of the world involves judging our experiences according to and as part of our ethics.

The idea of “making sense” unites with the objectives of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology focuses on the “body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society *make sense* of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves” (Heritage 1984, 4 – my emphasis). As Susan Smith (2000, 240 – my emphasis) succinctly states, “*how* does the world appear to be, and how do people make it like this?”

Part of the worldview and values of elder residents engenders the ethics and related value judgements that will help explicate the meanings that the women and men of Val Marie and Hafford derive from changes they may judge to be unwelcome, fulfilling, or of little consequence in their cultural landscape (Chapter Five). Given the centrality of meaning in this dissertation, the next section outlines and examines elements of this concept that will prove useful in the coming discussion.

3.1.2 – Meaning, ethics, and worldviews

In *Man’s Search For Meaning*, Viktor Frankl (1984, 121) notes how the preoccupation and search for meaning is a “primary motivation” for us as humans. Recalling from Chapter One,

meanings are “shared mental representations of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, meaning *connects* things” (Baumeister 1991, 15). Following the interpretation of David Korotkov (1998, 55), meaning reflects not only the “degree to which [our] life *makes emotional sense*” (my emphasis), but it also relies on us considering “that the demands confronted by [us] are perceived as being worthy of energy investment and commitment.” These ideas represent the approach I am using in my aim to explore the meanings that elder residents in these areas derive from their cultural landscape.

Furthermore, when these elements become connected to other places in an area, they contribute to a “web” of meaning, a visual metaphor Baumeister (1991, 16-7) favours. Mae A. Davenport and Dorothy H. Anderson (2005) also used this approach, referring to the “Web of river meanings” that link strands of sometimes disparate meanings that characterise the Niobrara River of Nebraska. In this way, we may kindle memories of particular places that have come to mean something according to the definitions proffered by Baumeister (1991) or Korotkov (1998). Hence, a strand of meaning may lead from a particular place or places to events or experiences that are themselves linked to family, growing up, our work, and so on. Gradually, these connected meanings may link together until a gaze over the landscape reveals the webs of meaning. The significance of meaning is tied to other concepts that shape our lives.

For instance, ethics are inherently tied to meaning and how we order our lives and world. Paul Roebuck (1999, 19) explains further:

[When] we think about ethics, ... We ask how we (or others) should live, mindful of ends, means and intentions. ... [E]thics, as a social practice, lived from the bottom-up, goes beyond codified rules to touch our sources of meaning, clarifying our understanding of ourselves and our lives, both individually and in the many overlapping collectivities of which we are a part.

This can be brought together with how Peter Singer (1995, 174-5) interpreted living ethically above. To briefly recall, “... to live ethically is to think about things beyond one’s own interests.”

The idea of thinking beyond oneself will feature prominently in the meanings some elder residents derive from their cultural landscape, one of the “collectivities” Paul Roebuck (1999) mentions above.

The idea of a worldview provides a glimpse of the values and beliefs that inform how individuals develop meaning and also their ethics. As Richard Dewitt (2004, 3) explains, “a worldview is not merely a collection of separate, independent, unrelated beliefs, but is instead an intertwined, interrelated, interconnected *system* of beliefs.” In its simplest form, belief is a proposition we hold as true. Chapters Four and Five offer an impression of the worldviews of elder residents in relation to their memories of growing up and making a living when younger.

The worldview of elder residents informs the various sources of meaning that, in part, contribute to their ethics. Worldviews are ingrained and provide the articulations we use to “make sense” and find meaning and identify the “shared mental representations of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, *meaning connects things*” (Baumeister 1991, 15). Our worldviews guide these connections. As Chapter Six explores, the meanings of elder residents interact with other meanings in the changing cultural landscape.

3.1.3 – Archival and documentary sources

To augment the meanings that elder residents shared with me and paint a more comprehensive cultural portrait, I also drew on archival sources. In so doing, the supplementary and complementary archival research also functioned as a source of reliability for my work (I discuss validity and reliability in a later section).

Several archival and documentary sources contribute to the context of the current research in a number of ways. For the most part, the sources are confined to memoirs written by those of European descent. Some of these documents are memoirs written by individuals from other parts of Saskatchewan (Andrew 1974; Dutli 2003; Fieguth 2003; Klimko and Taft 1993; Stegner 2000;

Parson 1981). Their comments reflect a way of life that shaped their lives as well as those of others including the elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie. For instance, the shared way of life may include the challenges confronted by homesteaders, farmers, and ranchers and the day to day routines of keeping gardens, livestock, or hunting and trapping to supplement these sources. The individuals who have written their memoirs provide an indication of a way of life that complement what elder residents explained during our conversations.

While archival and documentary sources offer insight into these commonalities, they also distinguish the unique lives and circumstances of the individuals living in and around Val Marie and Hafford. Daily routines were part of unique lives that played out amidst elements of a unique cultural landscape. Collectively, the composite of shared and distinct experiences of elder residents contribute to the holistic cultural landscape.

Several of the collections focus on the lives of the women and men who have lived in and around Hafford and Val Marie. These sources include community history books, oral histories, and memoirs written by residents of these areas. The value of the documents is immeasurable for several reasons. They have allowed me to “hear” voices of people who have passed away. Their words reflect the experiences and sensibilities that continue to shape the worldviews of those with whom I spoke. These documents have also contributed to my understanding of the cultural landscape in these areas. For instance, *Walk Down Memory Lane* paints a picture of Hafford and the surrounding area as remembered by some who participated in this dissertation.²¹ For the areas in and around Val Marie, one of the women who participated in this research collected oral histories as part of the GNP Oral History Project. The participants in this Oral History Project hint at the taken-for-granted understanding underlying the meanings that elder residents in this

²¹ The books *Val Echo* (Val Marie High School 1955) and *Wagon Trails Along the Whitemud* (Val Marie Homemakers Club 1971) address life in and around Val Marie. Another history book is currently being completed for the town of Val Marie and the surrounding countryside.

dissertation derive from their cultural landscape.

3.2 – Methods

3.2.1 – Procedures

As a visitor to both Hafford and Val Marie, I had an opportunity to briefly experience the current of life flowing through these communities and the surrounding countryside. Heeding the words of Harry Wolcott (1999), I sought as much as possible to distance myself from my own assumptions and stereotypes and instead rely on the residents with whom I spoke formally and informally to furnish me with the understandings they take for granted. My experiences were guided by what I observed occurring around me and through my activities within this milieu. I was perhaps more observant and more keen to listen, but as mentioned earlier, I defined myself as a “visitor” wishing to learn.

As such, I was able to experience a snapshot of the life that thrums in both communities – people going about their daily affairs, picking up a few groceries, or collecting their mail. It is important to emphasise how these experiences as well as the ideas and perspectives of elder residents who participated in this research are ultimately snap shots. Nonetheless, with these snapshots we can create a portrait of what elder residents derive from and confer upon their cultural landscape.

My research protocol followed the stipulations outlined by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) at the University of Saskatchewan. After receiving Beh-REB approval, I began the first stages of my research (see Appendix A for Consent Form given to participants). I found potential participants through a number of recognised methods. I took advantage of the guidance offered by community members, specifically those involved in RLBR while I was living in Hafford and some of those who worked for Parks Canada in Val Marie. I also relied on network or “snowball” sampling. This is a sampling strategy that “identifies cases of interest

from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (Creswell 2007, 127). After our recorded conversations, I asked these individuals if they knew of others who might be interested in participating in my research.

My objective was to speak with people who were interested in participating and those whose experiences were considered unique. The dissertation focussed on potential participants who satisfied a number of criteria: 1) male or female; 2) age 60 or over; 3) lived in each of the communities or surrounding area for at least 20 years (this is intended to reflect a strong connection with the landscape); 4) cognitively capable of participating. Ultimately, I spoke with 24 men and women in Hafford and 20 in Val Marie whose ages ranged between 60 and 100 years. The gender balance was relatively even with 10 women and 13 men from in and around Hafford and 10 men and 11 women from in and around Val Marie. Some discussions were completed with couples. In these instances, the partner would sometimes encourage the other by adding information or providing additional questions for his or her partner.

I personally transcribed the recorded conversations verbatim, leaving out unnecessary words such as “ahs” or “ums” or other conversational idiosyncrasies that I, or the individual with whom I was conversing, used. Following the actual recorded conversation, as well as during subsequent transcription, I took notes in an effort to capture the immediacy of my thoughts.

3.2.2 – Recorded conversations

Before beginning our face-to-face tape-recorded conversations, I ensured that the elder residents were agreeable to our conversations being recorded, with the additional assurance that recording could stop at any point. As the interview guide (Appendix B) shows, my intention was temporally based, touching at first on childhood and years spent growing up, work and making a living, and finally to the current situation. Although our conversations were semi-structured, I invited the residents to steer the conversation according to their own ideas, many of which I may

not have addressed in my guide.

Our conversations roughly followed a version of James Spradley's ethnographic questions described in *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979). These questions began by helping to build a rapport and a degree of trust between us. This part of our conversation included an explanation of the research, the reasoning behind recording our conversation, and an assurance that at any point the individual with whom I was speaking could end our discussion.

Following this introductory stage, I began with descriptive questions that followed the "grand tour" approach. An example was, "Tell me about your life when you were growing up? About your childhood? Did you grow up on a farm?" and "I'd be interested in you telling me what your day was like when you were young? Where would you go and what would you do? What was the countryside like and what was it that you enjoyed? (seasons, working on the farm, walking, animals, and so on)." Following these more descriptive questions were the "structural" and "contrast" questions.

Structural questions seek to learn how individuals have organised their knowledge (Spradley 1978). For instance, I sought to understand the structures of "home". As such, we were able to discuss where and what individuals considered to be their "home"; we discussed some of their favourite places and the reasons these places were special, and if these places were no longer special, these reasons were also discussed. During our conversations, I also attempted to comprehend the overall structure of their relationship with the land. In this instance, some referred to "Mother Nature" and heeding "her" authority, while others described a sense of alienation in their relationship with the land. Still for others, the relationship was one of unity with the land.

Finally, James Spradley refers to the use of contrast questions that help elicit the "dimensions of meaning which [participants] employ to distinguish the objects and events in their world" (1979, 60). For instance, I asked residents if they could tell me what they felt was the

difference between “land” and “home.” In so doing, I was trying to understand if and how they distinguished these two ideas. Toward the end of our conversations, in an effort to better appreciate the differences in “now” and “then,” I introduced the following questions for discussion: “What do you see people who are younger than yourself experiencing that is similar or different from what you experienced when you were growing up and working?” and “Thinking about the land, do you feel there are different challenges and demands from when you began farming/ranching. If so, in what ways are they different?”

Our conversations did not rely on the use of photographs. However, owing to the merit of photographs, some individuals illustrated their words with photographs either adorning their walls or in family albums. As Pauline Greenhill (1981, 3) discusses, photographs were an “evocation of the family.” They also functioned to metaphorically *transport* us to the time of which the elder residents were speaking. It was invaluable to see images of the homesteads and the people who populated their memories and words in addition to witnessing the pride of place that adorned walls or photo albums. The images helped the people and places of whom elder residents spoke to “come to life” for me.²²

Throughout my fieldwork, I maintained a detailed field journal in which I recorded my experiences, thoughts, and frustrations. For instance, after each recorded conversation, I would write of the experience and my initial impressions. The writings have been immensely helpful during the analysis as they could return me to the moment and conjure the sentiments I felt at the time of writing in my journal.

22 My time with elder residents was limited, and hence, the ability of words to animate these cultural landscapes was limited. In this light, I have also found the history books for both the areas in and around Hafford and Val Marie exceedingly useful. They depict the people and places who, until that point, were solely moored by word and imagination.

3.3 – Analysis: Exploration of conversations

To ensure that I had transcribed their words correctly and to also give elder residents an opportunity to clarify their ideas, participants had an opportunity to go through the transcripts of our recorded conversations. Nine of the twenty-four participants in and around Hafford and seven of the twenty in and around Val Marie elected to read through the transcripts and make changes. Since I was no longer living in the respective communities, most of these individuals posted their changes to me. However, I was able to speak with some of the participants on subsequent trips, at which time, they could return the transcript with the changes they had made. *Stephen* sent an additional letter after our recorded conversation. After receiving the transcript, *Stephen* also gave me a letter that was extremely valuable as it emphasised the ideas and perspectives he felt were most pertinent in his relationship with the cultural landscape.

During my exploration of what individuals had shared in our recorded conversations, I relied on the guidelines advocated by Irene and Herb Rubin (2005). Analysis began while completing my fieldwork, as I recorded my thoughts in my field journal. The progress of my fieldwork was filled with relief, frustration, uncertainty, and periodically, invigorating elation. I feel this reflects my active and honest engagement *with* and commitment *to* ideas and thoughts that have come to be a part of what defines this research.

More formal analysis began with the verbatim transcription of my conversations with elder residents. Transcribing the recorded conversations myself was essential as it allowed me to hear ideas and inflections. This proved critical in an in-depth understanding of the meanings and the fervency of thoughts conveyed by elder residents. There are portions of the transcriptions I can *read*, but having transcribed and re-played these on numerous occasions, the words return me to the emotions that I experienced during our conversations. The analysis continued with coding and the identification of patterns and themes.

3.4 – Coding and themes

With the benefit of my initial impressions, written after the recorded conversations, I read through the transcripts. I was able to conceptualise the ideas and perspectives of elder residents during our conversations. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), a *concept* is a word or a term that represents an idea important to a research problem. Therefore, I noted several hundred concepts such as “early farming life”; and “relating to the land”. I used comments of elder residents such as, “inside the land” or “seeing things grow” to conceptualise similar comments made by individuals. I also noted concepts related to change or loss during this initial stage of coding, such as “chemicals and farming,” “change in economy,” “government control,” or “loss of wildlife.” While reading through the transcripts, I also discovered concepts such as “farm, continuity, and children,” importance of family,” “respect the land,” or “Mother Earth.” With these annotations, I accomplished what was essentially a summary of the transcripts, to which I added concepts as I continued to re-read the transcriptions. As well, the concepts allowed me to begin clarifying the larger themes that began to emerge in the concepts contained in the words of the elder residents.

The next stage involved identifying larger patterns or themes, informed by my overall research question and the points I endeavoured to touch on during our recorded conversations. Rubin and Rubin (2005) define a *theme* as a statement that explains why something happened or what something means and is built up from the concepts. As they explain, the themes allowed me to integrate the concepts into a particular idea reflecting the relationship between the concepts. Therefore, I identified the similarities in some of the concepts and grouped them together under larger themes including “work/life,” “home,” “belonging,” “rewarding,” or “relating to the land.” I found other affinities and began to coalesce other concepts under larger themes such as “changes in agriculture,” “change in community,” “lack of services,” “hegemony,” “betrayal,” “disappointment,” or “loss of Nature.” Additionally, I grouped concepts into larger themes

including “taking responsibility,” “sustainability,” “tradition,” and “continuity.”

I then began to group these themes into broader themes and I subsequently determined three large categories or themes. Using specific criteria, I identified how themes such as, “tradition,” “changes in agriculture,” or “work/life” were part of the broadest themes of “connections,” “separation,” and “continuity.” Table 3.2 outlines the criteria I used to identify the broadest themes.

Themes	Criteria
Connections	Ideas and perspectives that residents make in reference to affirming sentiments they derive from connections with either other people, places or things (ideas, beliefs and so on).
Separation	Ideas and perspectives that refer to the loss of a person, place or thing (including a way of life).
Continuity	Ideas and perspectives that speak of a wish or intention for something – event, place, way of being – to be maintained or sustained.

Table 3.1: Themes used in analysing narratives.

For instance, the broad theme of “connections” specifically reflected the positive and constructive connections that elder residents expressed regarding their relationship with their cultural landscape. The broad theme of “separation” included concepts that referred to the loss of a person, place, or thing. Finally, the broad theme of “continuity” referred to concepts related to a wish or an intention for something – event, place, or way of being – to continue, be sustained, or to not change. Table 3.3 provides examples of the broadest themes in addition to the sub-themes and the individual concepts.

As part of this analysis, I sought to lay aside my personal beliefs when determining and identifying the patterns in the words of elder residents. While I expected that elder residents would share meaningful connections that characterised the relationships they have had with their cultural landscape, I did not anticipate the particular nature of these connections. Some of what I

encountered was entirely unexpected (although unsurprising), such as the strong and vehement sentiments of separation that arose when the conversation turned toward agriculture. Perhaps my expectations were guided by the underlying (however confining and erroneous) model of which Kathleen Woodward (2003, 56) spoke above; elder men and women should be gifted with attributes of wisdom and its “balanced reflection and judgment” rather than raw anger and frustration. Furthermore, I did not expect a theme of continuity that indicated the engagement, however unspoken, between elder residents and their cultural landscape.

BROAD THEME – CONNECTIONS					
THEMES	Taking root	Work-life	Community	Home	Affinity with land
CONCEPTS	Origins	Change in farming	School & community	Finding home	“Mother Nature”
	Family Pride	Responsibilities	Community remaining viable	Home – “a sense of ... having”	Relating to the land
	Early farm life	Work & reward	Town farmers	Feel of home	Inside the land
	Rootedness of family	Progress & Improvement	Value of knowing everybody	More than a view	“Walking the hills”

Table 3.2: Examples of identified concepts and themes.

BROAD THEME – SEPARATION				
THEMES	Community Change: Tangible reminders	Community Change: Services	Changes in Agriculture	RLBR & GNP
CONCEPTS	Loss of what forebears built	Moving to cities	Chemicals & farming	Always a protected area
	Loss of communities	Decline of towns	Change in farm equipment/ technology	Not free to roam
	Strangers in town	Grass isn't always greener	Loss of wildlife	Government control
	Loss of rail	Loss of heritage	Farming as mining	Human impact on the planet
BROAD THEME – CONTINUITY				
THEMES	Agricultures	Heritage	RLBR & GNP: Complementary	RLBR & GNP: Reconciling
CONCEPTS	Once a farmer, always a farmer	Heritage = sustainability	“We all live off the land”	Value of the Frenchman Valley
	Freedom	Heritage of sense of place	Importance of sharing “the beauty of it.”	Value of planet in its diversity
	Feed the countries	Becoming part of the prairie	Responsibility: “You pick up after yourself”	GNP – Everyone can enjoy
	Missed opportunities to listen	Inheriting values	Activism in community	“Nature takes its course.”

Table 3.2 (cont'd): Examples of identified concepts and themes.

Clearly, identifying the broad themes was only one step in the process to synthesise the ideas, thoughts, and perspectives of the elder residents. Analysis was akin to a process of distillation; my findings could be refined and re-refined each time the materials were assessed with “different” eyes and ideas.

3.5 – Concerns regarding validity and reliability

My overall approach reflects an increasingly accepted paradigm for research, one that is “concerned with the single experience, the individual crisis, the epiphany or moment of

discovery, with that most powerful of all threats to conventional objectivity, feeling and emotion” (Lincoln and Guba 2000, 179). With this said, in order to meet the criteria for trustworthiness and veracity, my research has relied on several widely accepted approaches. Egon Guba (1981) has discussed several approaches that lead to *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*.

The methods of “prolonged engagement,” “peer debriefing,” and “member checks” have enhanced the *credibility* of my research. Having lived in each of the communities for a month and a half, the method of “prolonged engagement” allowed me and participating elder residents to adjust to each other.²³ “Peer debriefing” with the residents and members of my Advisory Committee and Research Supervisor was essential as it gave me an opportunity to discuss my experiences as well as possible solutions to problems I was encountering.

Throughout the recorded conversations, I conducted “member checks” as part of our discussions. Member checks refer to how “... interpretations are continuously tested as they are derived with members of the various audiences and groups from which data are solicited” (Guba 1981, 85). Using member checks ensured that I correctly understood what elder residents were explaining. I could either directly ask for clarification or simply re-phrase a question to ensure that I had correctly understood their meaning. Essential to the overall credibility of my work (Guba 1981), member checks were incorporated into all aspects of the research process beginning with the recorded conversations. As I mentioned above, some elder residents also took the opportunity to read through and make changes to the transcripts.

The objective of *transferability* is to recognise the individuality and idiosyncratic nature of the experiential knowledge of the women and men with whom I spoke. Through our

23 I say this with full recognition that for some, “prolonged engagement” must be measured in years rather than weeks or months. Still, it is important to acknowledge the length of time I lived in these communities.

conversations during the in-depth interviews, elder residents offered a “thick description” of their ideas and perspectives. A “thick description” refers to narratives that present “detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships...The voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (Denzin 1989, 83).

I achieved *confirmability* through a form of “triangulation.” This involved the use of multiple sources based on archival research in addition to previous research focussed on Val Marie, Hafford and the surrounding countryside. Archival research took the form of documents pertaining to settlement, culture and lifeways. These complemented the in-depth interviews in addition to my own experiences in these communities. Finally, the *dependability* of my research process can be found in an “audit trail” that will allow an external auditor to examine the processes used in data collection and analysis (Guba 1981). My Research Supervisor as well as members of my Advisory Committee functioned as “external auditors”; as I have already noted, I also maintained a field journal in which I recorded my thoughts as well as the cocktail of emotions that defined my experiences.

3.6 – Background on the participants and our conversations

The diverse backgrounds of elder residents chiefly depict the settlement initiatives I mentioned earlier. Those who migrated to the area in the latter part of the twentieth century augment this diversity. The national backgrounds of the forebears of residents in Hafford include Eastern Canada, England, France, Poland, Ukraine and the United States. For those living in and around Val Marie, the national origin of their parents and grandparents is Western Europe, Eastern Canada (Quebec), Métis, and the United States. Despite working in agriculture, none of the individuals involved in farming operated large-scale farms or owned what is now commonly known as an “agribusiness.”

In both areas, all of the elder residents with whom I spoke, either grew up on a farm

(dryland, grain, or mixed farming) or a cattle ranch, worked on one when they were younger, or currently work and live on a farm or ranch. Most of the elder women and men who participated in this research are either retired or semi-retired from agricultural work. The latter are still actively involved in agriculture, either through continuing to ranch or farm or periodically helping their children who have taken over the agricultural practice. Some individuals are engaged in a career that is no longer linked to agriculture. In order to explore how elder residents relate to their cultural landscape as a whole, the following chapters explore some of the meanings related to agriculture.

While living in Hafford, my temporary home was a former bed and breakfast owned by Peter and Valerie Kingsmill. The house is located on Main Street, directly across from the post office and a short walk from the grocery store, pharmacy, credit union, and senior centre. Similarly, in Val Marie, my home for a month and a half was also close to the local grocery store and post office. Except for the final week, I lived in a trailer that Parks Canada provides for individuals such as myself who visit the park to conduct research. During the final week, I moved to a house rented by the Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, for students completing research at the GNP.

In both communities, by virtue of my location, I had an opportunity to sample a small taste of the “goings on” of life. People went about their business in both Hafford and Val Marie, and for a short time, I could participate in the routines of life – buying my groceries, mailing a letter, or shovelling the path and sidewalk of snow while I was in Hafford. I came to know the streets and buildings in both communities and to this day, they remain a fixture in my mind's eye. This was primarily what I sought to discuss with the elder residents – their impressions of the town and village and the surrounding area through their mind's eye.

Some of the recorded conversations took place in my temporary home in Hafford and Val Marie, while other conversations required I visit the homes of participants. Of the twenty-four

elder men and women with whom I spoke in Hafford, eleven of the participants visited the bed and breakfast. Here, we sat at a table in a front room decorated with a few of Valerie's paintings adorning the walls. I visited the homes of the other thirteen elder residents around Hafford to complete the interviews. For the elder residents in and around Val Marie, all but two of my recorded conversations with elder residents took place in their homes.

While visiting the homes of elder residents, I had an opportunity to glimpse a part of their lives through the photos on their walls. For instance, the majority of the elder residents in Hafford decorated their walls with a version of “The Last Supper” by Leonardo da Vinci, intimating the role of religion in their lives. When I visited the homes of some elder residents, they augmented their ideas and perspectives by pointing out pictures on the walls or photo albums around their homes. On two occasions while I was in Hafford, individuals were able to show me photos on their walls that depicted former homesteads and fathers, mothers, aunts, and uncles who have since passed away. The tables and walls also suggested their pride in their own descendants – children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

During my time in Val Marie, the elder residents took advantage of my visits to share some of their cultural landscape with me. For instance, one of the couples showed me their former home, a simple structure, visible through a large picture window in their kitchen. Another couple gave me a tour of the buildings and equipment they use to raise bees. Still other individuals took the time to drive me around the land they currently own or land they owned in the past. On each occasion, in and around Hafford and Val Marie, the elder residents shared an aspect of a life and sometimes a view that helped to touch off myriad connections to their cultural landscape – home, work, family, heritage, and so on – and the other reasons to remain.

Albeit short, my experiences in and around their homes helped me to engage a battery of senses when conversing with elder residents. I could try to see and feel, as well as hear, the sentiments that have informed ideas and perspectives and shaped the meanings they derived from

their cultural landscape. During our conversations, the elder residents responded to my queries about their early lives, periodically slipping into a longer narrative related to a particular event or experience. In some instances, the conversation remained stilted and impersonal and could not travel to a place where the elder resident sought to share a sentiment with a narrative. For those who did share their sentiments, the narratives were at times heartwarming and at other times, the narratives encapsulated their frustration and disappointment. In either case, seeing the cultural landscape through their eyes (interpreting the cultural landscape from their perspective) – whether by virtue of a photograph or a walk on the land of which they spoke – helped to animate, enliven, and augment the narratives of elder residents.

Therefore, when we sat down to talk, I asked elder residents to focus on an aspect of their lives that they and others may take for granted. On two occasions, elder residents commented on how my queries cut across the grain of their taken-for-granted thought. *Richard* in Hafford explains this point, commenting how he had never thought of the “land”:

Richard: *But basically, I can't tell you about the land. It's a given thing. We take it for granted maybe.*

Lee: *In what way?*

Richard: *Well, it's there.*

Lee: *And so you don't think about it.*

Richard: *No, you don't. Not ... I've never thought of it until you're mentioning it now [Laughter]. I thought it was just there. So this is mine, that's my neighbours and stuff like that, but it's not what you mean. It's the basic thing of ... What is land? It's a creation.*

Perhaps it is not that *Richard* has never thought of the meanings related to the “land.” He would likely have done so in the way meanings normally occur – bound inextricably with other sources of meaning. As Baumeister (1991, 15) has explained, “meaning connects things.” By referring to “land” as a “creation,” *Richard* points to the numerous interwoven threads that form the fabric of meaning. As *Scott* near Val Marie noted, “Yeah, and it's all part of the country. It's part and

parcel of the hills, the area, the people. All one lump.”

These comments represent what I have attempted to do during this work. My intention has not been to isolate elements of meanings from the cultural landscape, implying they exist alone. Instead, by highlighting the meanings offered by elder residents, I focus on the complex of diverse and divergent meanings that are indeed “part and parcel” of the cultural landscape.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONNECTIONS – GROWING UP, WORKING, AND MAKING A LIVING

4th May, 2005, 10h30 pm, Val Marie, SK

It was such a pleasure to go out to Lise's old place – in Gergovia. She says it was the centre before the rail came. Then everyone shifted to where Val Marie is now. Dianne [Legault] said as we watched Lise walk off, "She's home." It's really neat, the expanse – the landscape. It's different when people can see for a great distance. Something happens to us, be it grasslands, mountains, or the sea. We become part of something greater? Or rather, it comes 'home' to us that we are a part of a larger reality.

(Excerpt from my field journal)



Figure 7: Home – sometimes where we least expect it to be. Now gone, this photograph shows the location of Gergovia, the community that preceded Val Marie (Source: Lee Everts).

The objective in Chapters Four and Five is to explore the meanings that elder residents shared in relation to when they were younger. Accordingly, the question guiding this stage of the discussion is, how do elder residents derive meaning in relation to their earlier lives growing up, working, and making a living in their cultural landscape? These meanings grant insight into their worldview and ethics. The current chapter focusses on the meanings elder residents derive from memories of growing up, working, and making a living. Chapter Five goes on to explore the meanings elder residents convey in relation to interactions within their community and with the land. While some narratives describe emotive connections to the people, places, and events in Hafford and Val Marie, others ply the countryside with meanings in relation to connections with the fields, hills, or nature in general.

Covering a broad stroke of time, the narratives not only enliven the cultural landscape with meanings that emanate from personal and familial pasts and memories. They also convey what elder residents have considered valuable. At the close of Chapter Five, I examine how the meanings explored in Chapters Four and Five inform the ethics of elder residents and subsequently influence the meanings addressed in Chapter Six.

4.1 – Taking root

4.1.1 – Gardens and stones

‘Deep rooted’ is how some of the elder residents referred to themselves. Their comments reflected connections that served as an unquestionable source of meaning for them. The town and countryside in and around both Hafford and Val Marie are dotted with places where the opacity of time becomes translucent and past and present compress. Having grown up in the area, some called upon their connections with the men and women – mothers, fathers, grandparents – who, decades ago, settled and homesteaded in this part of Canada.

For some residents, part of their connection to their past is symbolised by a few select

stones residing in their gardens or around their homes. These are a pleasant decoration to my eyes; however, for these individuals, the stones are much more. *Marianne*, who lives outside of Hafford, shared a vignette that described a visit to the site of her grandparents' farm. Her memories remain vivid of visiting and playing there as a child. Although the farm has changed hands a number of times, eradicating many of its physical reminders, some remain as potent anchors to her past. For instance, I had asked whether she had ever found the garden, now long gone, that her great uncle had tended decades ago:

***Marianne:** Yes we did! This past summer, although the yard has changed so much because now, there was hedges in there and stuff like that. ... there's been three different owners there since my uncle left the place. And yeah, my sister and I, we both drove there, ... [W]e kind of looked around and it happened that – my cousin actually owns it now or his son actually owns it. ... But anyway, he's the one that owns it and he happened to be in there loading some grain the day we got there, so we had a little bit of a reunion in there and kind of looked around the yard. We even picked up some stones that come from the yard and we brought them home. ... I've got them in my flowerbed. Not big stones, but just different types, just to be able to say ... they come from that yard.*

***Lee:** That's right. And so how did that make you feel?*

***Marianne:** Very nostalgic.*

***Lee:** Oh I can imagine.*

***Marianne:** Kind of sad, too. To see the past, kind of wiped away like that now. Because all the old things are gone and actually there is no house on there anymore.*

Yet the stones she collected symbolise her rootedness and provide an inviting door into her past. Nostalgia is a complex sentiment. Janelle L. Wilson observes that “What we are nostalgic for reveals what we value, what we deem worthwhile and important. Through our nostalgia, we are recreating happy memories, pursuing happiness in the past” (Wilson 2005, 26). The sadness *Marianne* and others may feel about lost physical reminders of the past is inherent in nostalgia, a sentiment that owes much to the juxtaposition of the past with the present. Our nostalgia disentangles one or two joy-laden elements of meaning from the complexity of the past and

incorporates these into the present. The stones that decorate her garden can be symbolic of those happy memories and permit the past to live momentarily in the present. With this as buttress, individuals such as *Marianne* are able to make sense of the present in the context of longed-for elements of the past.

In Val Marie, *Pierre* shared a similar story centred on stones that had ringed his grandfather's place. These he salvaged before selling it – practicality and pragmatism shot through with kind sentiment and meaning:

Pierre: ... [T]here were big white rocks there. But that goes all the way around in front of the house. That's where my grandfather died. So I removed the rocks because I broke that area, because there was no use leaving it going to weed. But I stacked up the rocks and I want to bring them here. Make some sort of stepping rock.

The stones will be put to good use, but they symbolise an indelible rootedness and continuity with the past. While I was speaking with *Adam* and *Heather*, *Adam* proudly showed me a miniature stone barn that he had made and modelled after his grandfather's barn. Having entered the barn on numerous occasions, *Adam* had meticulously re-created the inextricable link between his life and that barn. It is a tie to the place where he grew up and began his days, but also one to Val Marie. The creation of the miniature stone barn indicates a complex irony of meaning that he had perhaps inadvertently built into the barn. In commemorating his own familial past and connection to a farming way of life, *Adam* had used rocks from the rail bed where, as he and *Heather* told me, they used to walk – meanings at the level of family and community seamlessly interwoven. It was particularly poignant for me given that during my visit, the final “ties” of the rail way had been lifted and removed.

The stones now resting in the garden or around the houses of these individuals or the miniature stone barn painstakingly constructed are links to the past. They are links to a lineage and a symbol of the deep rootedness of elder residents. We link ourselves with others who are

part of a shared lineage or memory. In so doing, “... every act contains within it implicit links to other acts separated in time and space. These future acts orientate and shape the present one and it is the flow of life as a whole which gives each act point and purpose” (Christopher Gosden 1994, 16). As Chapter Seven explores, links through time play a chief role in the efforts of some elder residents to sustain the continuity of certain meanings.

4.1.2 – “Building” connections with the past

Similarly, particular places within the communities – houses, churches, and shops – act as a connection with the past. *Gordon* and *Rosalyn* from Hafford took me on an imaginary walk through part of the town. In my mind, they erected some of the events and buildings that once existed:

***Gordon:** And just where the Catholic church is there, some of the buildings – if you walk by – there are buildings there and barns and so on and people lived ... it’s all been destroyed over the last two or three years.... And the road that goes past the hospital was the old highway. That’s the way the 40 highway went.*

They shared a glimpse of the town through their eyes. For me, the buildings of which they spoke were either gone or dilapidated husks. Nonetheless, the remnants of the buildings offer purchase for memories, connecting people such as *Gordon* and *Rosalyn* to a re-membered past. Those of family and community further enhance the potency and fullness of the memory. *Gordon* went on to explain:

***Gordon:** My mom also did a lot of other things. And from our farm – in the days when you could do this, without government sanctions and other things – people would come and buy raw milk and people would come and get eggs sometimes ... people still do here run that. People would ... cream, cheese, homemade cheese and all that kind of stuff. And because people ... a new policeman would come here and they would say ‘oh, do you know that you can get this and this from here and this and this from there.’ So they would come and we would get to know a lot of them.*

His words indicate how other memories such as family merge and link with those related to the community. These in turn, lend strength to a connection with a past symbolised by these broken down buildings. Like a palimpsest, the memory of the buildings and their presence in the cultural landscape cannot be completely erased as they are inevitably linked to other memories, as *Gordon* explained, of the daily and weekly churning of life. Sight of the buildings evokes a collection of memories that brings the past into the present.

Such memories increase in value and strength when shared with others. In his introduction to Maurice Halbwach's *On Collective Memory*, Lewis Coser (1992, 22) explains how "[i]t is of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember and recreate the past." This dovetails with the definition of meaning that Roy Baumeister (1991, 15) offers – "shared mental representations of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, meaning connects things". For *Gordon* and *Rosalyn*, the old buildings come to life in the memories of family, community, and events.

The same is true for some in Val Marie. *Dave* who lives just outside of Val Marie explained how one of his links with the village has been the local theatre, a central part of life for the community since the Thirties. Related memories crowd together for *Dave* – starting the fire in the wood stove and sweeping the hall – and hasten the memory of the theatre into his mind. Other elder residents also commented about this mainstay in the town. It was the "evening out" and respite from daily work of ranching and farming, and raising their families. *Madeline*, a long-time resident of Val Marie, used to look forward to Thursdays when she and her husband would go to the show. The individual memories of the time and place are different, corresponding to the lives and situations of each person. Nonetheless, the memories coalesce around the theatre. In fact, this particular landmark in time and space is one that I also enjoyed, just over sixty-five years after it first opened its doors. In this way, I and other visitors can count ourselves as part, however

fleeting, of this collective memory.

Still other parts of Val Marie echo with the memories that provide a junction in time where past remains present. *Liz* and *Chris* told me of where *Liz's* family had their store. Although now closed, it had remained as a landmark in the town for over seventy years. Together, they patiently told me of its location, using stores and businesses that had recently become a part of my own 'landscape lexicon':

***Liz:** Okay right next to it, between the Credit Union and the cafe, that's where our store was.*

***Chris:** There's trees growing in the lot now.*

***Liz:** Grandpa had that - first part dragged in from Orkney with horses and telephone poles. Cross country. Their first store was in their house down here and then they went ahead and they dragged that in and then they added onto it. Like I said, I cut my eye teeth on the cash register.*

***Lee:** So when was that?*

***Liz:** Oh, about 1925, 26.*

***Lee:** And so what was the reason that they decided to come to here then?*

***Liz:** Well, he homesteaded in Orkney and Grandma came into some money so she set him up in a store.*

***Chris:** They bought a store in Orkney and it was in the Fall of the year. They couldn't move it until Spring. So, they bought this house in town which I said earlier was the nicest house in town. And they set the front part up as a store - temporarily until they could bring the one from Orkney over and reset it here. Then they added on to it eventually. They got bigger and bigger.*

***Liz:** The lot was 25 by 50 and the store covered the whole thing.*

***Chris:** Seventy-two years the family had the store in operation in Val Marie.*

Like *Gordon* and *Rosalyn* in Hafford, they brought the past in Val Marie to life for me, speaking of how the old Mountie headquarters was situated along the river. I had walked past what is now "green space" with little thought to its origins. For me, "unanchored by ancestry" (Bolgiano 1998, 117) in Saskatchewan, their words pulled together a strand of meaning. Albeit wisp-thin for me, for people like *Chris* and *Liz*, decades of living in the town and for *Liz*, working in the store,

“cutting her eye-teeth” at the register, yield a more substantial strand of meaning. For them, the landmark remains vivid, drawn from a palpable memory.

Liz’s family has lived in Val Marie for three generations with many of the buildings feeling the hammer and workmanship of her forebears. As *Liz* told me, her “family goes back a long way.” Together, the theatre, the old Mountie headquarters, the church and convent, and the green space where *Liz*’s family’s store was situated contributes to the cultural landscape of Val Marie. Each is anchored by the memories of individuals and tightened by a collective memory shared with other family and community members and in part, with visitors such as myself. Elder residents also referred to the different locations around Val Marie that open a flood of connections to the cultural landscape of their parents and grandparents.

Blurring the edges between the present and the past, these places offer sturdy conduits into the history of ranching that took hold in the early part of the twentieth century. For one of the women with whom I spoke as part of this research, a favourite spot is an old rhubarb patch near a former line camp of the Turkey Track ranch. As I noted earlier, the Turkey Track was one of the ranches that began its journey into local legend during the “Golden Age” of ranching in the early twentieth century. It is one of the places that contribute to the meanings imbuing her cultural landscape. For elder residents in and around both Hafford and Val Marie, a palpable sense of connection and continuity travels effortlessly along the path of time, closing the space between now and then.

4.1.3 – The smell of hayfields

The strong ties to forebears not only relies on the tangibility of gardens or buildings. For some individuals, the aroma of hay or alfalfa or the fragrance of lilacs were also fondly redolent of their past. How the women below derive meaning, echoes that of Wallace Stegner, a writer who spent six formative years in Eastend, a town on the western reaches of the Frenchman River,

north west of Val Marie. For him, it was the smell of wolf willow. He says, “It is wolf willow, and not the town or anyone in it, that brings me home” (Stegner 2000, 18). When I asked *Diane* about what came to her mind when I said “land,” without hesitation, she responded “hayfield.” Although I was struck by the immediacy of her response, she explained how it had become inured in her senses over the years:

Diane: One thing I like about the hayfields was when you were haying and you were cutting the hay, alfalfa, it always smelled so good. It really had a nice smell. I often think, yeah. ... That’s what I think about because we always did haying.

While the smellscape to which *Diane* refers is “enveloping, unstructured, and often directionless space” (Porteous 1996, 36), it is not truly directionless as it unrelentingly hearkens her *back*. But as soon as the sense does so, gathering the sentiment from those past experiences and memories, it returns to the present where it relinquishes its cache. That cache may well be positive or negative, but in these instances, it is a pleasant “enveloping, unstructured” space it creates, kept alive by the lingering momentum of the thought.

4.1.4 – Synopsis

The narratives and vignettes above demonstrate the blurred distinction between past and present. The past and our expectations for the future play a central part in how we experience and act in the present (Adam 1995). In blurring past and present, elder residents re-member their past. As such, they have re-aggregated members of their life-story, their prior selves and others who belonged to the story (Cattell 2002). Re-membered parents and grandparents and *their* actions beget meanings that, as coming chapters will discuss, beget further meaningful actions by these men and women.

Meaning is also enhanced and permitted by a continuity and time depth entailing what Baumeister (1991, 20) refers to as “complex, far-reaching relationships that transcend the

immediate situation.” He adds how these “may even approach timeless or eternal perspectives.” As such, the connections of elder residents described above and the meanings they yield, contribute to their ethics and the ethical rules by which individuals deliberate on the rightness or wrongness of their surroundings.

Chapter Two touched on how Jæren district farmers “eyewitness” their landscape, as they are “... basically working the *same land as their ancestors*, and by reproducing the ancestors’ practices they remember the past and keep it alive” (Setten 2004, 409 - my emphasis). Similarly, for farmers and ranchers in the current research, the land is given meaning by the blurring of past and present – the smell of hay, and land cleared of stones and debris. Meanings related to these memories contribute to the ethics built on values that help shape meaning.

Examining meanings indicative of the connections that elder residents have with their cultural landscape offers insight to the meanings that engender their sentiments of separation. This is the focus for Chapter Six. Separation from the cultural landscape turns on meanings symptomatic of land that is no longer or may cease to be the “same land as their ancestors” (Setten 2004, 409). The meanings elder residents derive from their efforts to begin their lives and make a living, pursuing their work-life²⁴ add to the complexity of this separation.

4.2 – Work-Life

4.2.1 – Watching and learning

The work and life of elder residents has grown, in part, out of links with their families as well as their communities. The meaning of work has gradually become a part of their worldview. The shaping of our worldviews is influenced by a number of elements including the natural environment, social and historical conditions, and culture, particularly, knowledge passed on

²⁴ This title was inspired by *Stephen* who lives north of Hafford and who referred to farming as his “job-life.”

from older generations (Kearney 1996).

When discussing growing up, elder residents shared vignettes that recalled time spent watching and learning. As children do, they learned and absorbed things their mothers, fathers, uncles, and aunts did not realise they were teaching. Memories of parents making sacrifices to ensure the well-being of their children were a common thread.

Growing up in the years after the close of World War II, a time when Val Marie was still finding its feet, *Emile* spoke of how his father devoted some of his week to cutting the hair of the many bachelors who lived in and around Val Marie at that time. At other times, his father would fix shoes: “It was amazing really when you think about it, how many different jobs he had. I guess everybody did that kind of thing.” His father, an elevator agent, had an office in the old grain elevator that still stands as sentinel along the railway (Figure 8). *Emile* spoke of how his dad often worked into the evening, buying grain in the day and then completing the paperwork. Listen as he deftly weaves the continuity in his own life – building his home and planting the many trees that now stand quietly by – to that of his father and in fact, the community:

Emile: Yeah, it's very important to me really because it's an accomplishment that the wife and I, we created everything ourselves. We didn't create it, but I mean the trees were offered free and we took advantage of the programmes at the time and just to see things grow. And you'll see spruce trees here in this yard that you don't see anywhere else in this whole area. Have you seen any anywhere else?

Lee: No. I haven't seen this many trees anywhere else.

Emile: People say you can't grow spruce trees down here. Well ...

Lee: Sure enough ...

Emile: And they were about this high when I put them in, looked like a little twig when we got them. They came from the tree nursery at Indian Head is where we got them. So, when you look at something like that, at thirty-five years down the road, it's a ... it gives you a good feeling. Like you actually did something with your life! It's not that important but still, it's an accomplishment like any other type of thing that you, that a person makes up his mind that he's going to do.

Lee: Yeah, absolutely. Well it makes me think ... how [do] you feel when you look at the elevator where your dad worked? Do you get that feeling there when you think about

[your father's work] ...?

Emile: *I do, yeah.*



Figure 8: Grain elevator in Val Marie that is no longer in use (Source: Maureen Reed).

For *Emile*, places such as the grain elevator open a doorway through which the above memories and their attendant cache of meanings enter the here and now, interweaving with his own accomplishments. Despite his final words, *Emile* does know how to explain the elements of meaning that link him, his family, and the community at large. These meanings articulate a sense of accomplishment, perseverance, and determination to do what is necessary. They filter into the cultural landscape where he and his family, like his father, “create” a part of the cultural landscape. In this sense, the cultural landscape of Val Marie as a palimpsest is richly apparent; the meanings remain “visible” and palpable over time.

Similarly, for *Richard* who lives north of Hafford, recollections combine with thoughts of sacrifice and high regard for the valuable actions of his mother and father.

Richard: *And my dad told me, he said, ‘I’m sending you to school. I couldn’t afford to send the other three, but you go to school. So you’re not stupid like I am.’ But he wasn’t stupid. Old people had this sense of knowledge ... common sense. Again, you go back to*

that. He brought us up. He sacrificed. Mom sacrificed a lot of stuff. She sacrificed a lot of clothing that she could have bought for herself, but she bought us clothing, our show clothes and stuff like that. And school books and stuff.

Like *Emile's* father, cutting the hair of bachelors to make a few extra and needed dollars or working late nights at the grain elevator, *Richard's* parents were bolstered by determination and a commitment to do what was needed. His shared perspectives and thoughts reflect the value and meaning of the memory and the lesson it embodies. The vignette *Richard* shared also reflects the importance he places on these memories and points to how they have shaped his worldview. In part, the sentiments of perseverance and determination were fired by no small amount of hope. Thus, they are part of a collective history and experience linking the tens of thousands who settled in Saskatchewan (Waiser 2005).

In this light, *Mike* made a life farming in the area around Hafford. He told me of how his family came to Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century with certain trades and skills they had acquired in their country of origin – tailoring, tanning, and so on. They were able to draw on this knowledge and skill as they forged a life on their homesteads. Those similar to *Mike* and his family learned the merits of self-sufficiency – tanning leather, hunting, baking bread, or berry picking – aspects of life they came to take for granted as essential in making a living.

Drawing on such skills and knowledge, children were instructed to do “jobs” that were an “instrumental activity” or “done principally for the sake of something else”(Baumeister 1991, 119). While Baumeister (1991) refers to the workaday lives of those who may spend their shifts in modern-day factories, in this instance, the survival of the family was the “something else.” The parents and forebears of the elder residents relied on the resources of family, community, their knowledge, and their skills.

Mike continued, remembering the child in him spending seemingly endless hours softening leather. The efficiency of the task involved the use of a contraption developed and

invented by his father and uncle. *Mike's* efforts were shared with the rest of the family. As the following narrative shows, his chores and those of others contributed to the life of the whole family:

Mike: *Well we were school age, each one had his chores to do. ... [M]y older sisters would be milking the cows. Each one had his thing to do. I'd make sure there was wood for the night and if it was winter, that there was enough wood in the porch, some right by the stove to keep us warm for the rest of the day. Come early fall, we had to go and collect this wood. And so we'd go into the bush and put it in piles because there was a lot of deadwood always. So you'd collect that, put it in rows and then the older members of the family or the workmen who would go and pick up that on sleighs. And it was usually in the fall, right after snowfall, because then they can put up on the sleighs, that had these long arms to hold them and they'd pile up this in the bush. Later, the workmen with a sleigh would load them.*

Self-sufficiency for a family and in fact, the need to work together was an aspect of life several people remembered. It is a well-known aspect of the family farm wherein it is the family who provides the productive capital such as land, buildings, and livestock, as well as the labour (Stirling 2001). The above narrative conveys what *Mike* and other families, newly settled and forging a living, took for granted. The cooperation became a part of his worldview and ethics.

The appreciation for the efforts of parents and forebears was also captured by *Lilian*, who lives on a mixed farm near Val Marie and who shared some of her thoughts and the connections she observed and felt between their actions and her own:

Lilian: *One of the things that I remember, particularly remember, is the rock piles and the hard, hard work that those rocks entailed. Cleaning the land, clearing the land and you might say nurturing it for the growth that was to come and the little bit of seeding that they did each year to prove up their homestead. What really sticks in my mind is the hard work that they must have encountered. To this day, there are still enormous rocks. ... But where [my father-in-law] did settle and where we live to this day is just filled with rocks. We can see what we deal with rocks and picking them with better equipment.*

They did all that by hand on a stoneboat.²⁵ That really had an impact upon me and how hard they must have worked to get the land to this point of production.

I asked if she could put a finger on how this has affected her perspective of the land she has worked and farmed. In response, *Lilian* pointed to the heart of what she derives from the actions of her forebears: “It probably gives me a greater appreciation for it, because I know that those who have gone before me have worked so hard to get it to this point.”

The narrative that *Lilian* shared reveals meanings that she experiences when seeing the cleared land. The cultural landscape multiplies these meanings as the cache of memories encourage *Lilian* to recall the combined “energy investment” of her own family and that of her forebears. The memories serve as a way to “re-collect” the people and events that shape and contribute to her web of meaning and appreciation for their energy investment. The palimpsest of interwoven meanings derived from her relationship with her cultural landscape contributes to her ethics. In later chapters, *Lilian* expresses her perplexity with current agricultural practices while Chapter Seven addresses how she and others are seeking to continue meanings that stem from the meanings she shared above.

4.2.2 – Mingling of work & life

During our conversations, elder residents referred to particular places in their cultural landscape where work and life converged. Connected by their past actions or those of their forebears, these spots have become meaningfully knit into their cultural landscape. Activities such as going to collect cattle or berry picking were essential components of survival for the elder women and men, yet they reflected the merging of work and life.

Work itself is an avenue to meaning and value. As humans, work is the essential attribute

²⁵ This is a sledge-like contraption that individuals would use to remove the stones when clearing their fields in preparation for cultivation.

of our lives through which we develop society and ourselves as social beings within that society (Stirling 2001). Although work begins with the need to satisfy basic biological needs, such as food or shelter, the intertwining of culture renders work activities with meanings that can make it unrecognisable as work (Baumeister 1991).

Speaking of what the landscape near Hafford evokes, *Gail* remembers her impressions of the cultural landscape, touching on how work during her childhood was unrecognisable as work:

Gail: Yeah, because we went, this way, this way and the pasture was up at the corner. So we'd come from school and we'd go in on that quarter and we'd find the cows and we'd bring them home. And lots of times if it happened to be windy or something, you couldn't hear the cowbell, you walked around for a couple of hours to find them. And that pasture was sold by the CPR too, it was sold in the sixties, I think early sixties and all bulldozed. But you know, there's still little bushes around, couple of ... like my dad had a couple dug outs, there's still bushes. But in my mind, I can still see that pasture. An awful lot of the trails in that pasture. [T]here were cow trails. ... The cows would go certain ways and they would have their trails and you can just, in your mind, you can just see where it follows this bush here and this bush here and so on.

As *Gail* explores, places in her cultural landscape hold a cache of memories and meaning. In remembering, her narrative re-aggregates the people as well as the places that invest the cultural landscape with meaning (Cattell 2002). Like the etched trails that *Gail* unthinkingly followed to fetch the cows at the end of the day, the memory is equally etched in her mind.

In the Wood Mountain region, nearer to Val Marie, *Zoé* relates a similar sentiment in her narrative. She describes the everyday and taken-for-granted nature of work or chores that were a part of her life:

Zoé: ... we used to get, my sister and I, we used to get on horses and ride around wherever we wanted to go. Go off and pick berries. Our chores were sort of our pleasures. Like they weren't really chores. Like going to the barn and gathering or going out to gather eggs was just another adventure. Going off to get the milk cows ... was when I first became interested in wild plants. I can remember I was about eight years old and I decided I would press, mount and press all the different wild flowers that

grew on the ranch. Everything was always related to the ranch. And I guess, because the ranch had such a varied landscape. This ranch didn't just consist of this place and the land surrounding this place.

Zoé puts it into words for us – “Our chores were sort of our pleasures.” *Zoé's* cultural landscape is animated by daily routines that mingled life and work, imbuing the cultural landscape with meaning.

The blurred line between work and life echoes a characteristic quality of an holistic cultural landscape, that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. “Work” and “life” exemplify two of those parts. The narratives are drawn from memories that have been filtered through the eyes, ears, and feel of a child. The ethics of individuals begins its formation and slow accretion during these early and “formative” years. Bearing this in mind, what of the mingling of work and life drawn from the years spent working and making a living?

As *Zoé* explains, work and life ranged widely and included the village and town, the ranch or farm, as well as the surrounding land. This idea was mentioned by most of the individuals with whom I spoke. The mingling of work and life that characterised the childhood of many of the elder residents became inured in their lives and worldviews.

Unlike their childhood, however, it was not always a matter of work being a source of joy – hard work responded to necessity. Some of the elder men and women described how strain and effort defined their work. *Diane* in Val Marie represents the experiences of others when she explained “a day in the life” when she was raising her family. Her average day accords with other elder residents – hauling wood, coal, and water, baking, washing clothes, and ironing. Periodically, she contributed to the “outside work” of hauling bales and looking after the animals.

Meaningfully, the places associated with work and life were often identical. *Diane* explained how she and her children would go for picnics at the same spot: “We had a little spot up there that had a big rock and you could sit and watch the view all over and see everything. The

kids loved it up there.” That view would have been a mosaic of places made meaningful through the energy investment of the family, the lynchpin of agriculture at the time.

The landscape that people like *Diane* could see contained individual meaningful places where the demands of work on farms or ranches were “perceived as being worthy of energy investment and commitment” (Korotkov 1998, 55). Yet, this same cultural landscape is where life played out in terms of enjoying picnics as did *Diane* and her children, fetching the cattle on the way home as *Gail* recalled, or “walking the hills” as several in Val Marie fondly recalled. *Stephen*,²⁶ who farmed and still lives north of Hafford, eloquently pressed the point when he explained the following:

The parcel of earth that a farmer is tied to is job, home, life, all in one. There is no “going to work”; that job/life begins in getting out bed, involves that bit of land ... cradle to grave, as it were. But more.

The ideas and perspectives on the mingling of work and life lay some of the groundwork for Chapter Six. Elder residents shared how their worldview incorporated the value and importance of work. As children, work was imperceptible as they fulfilled the needs of the larger whole – family and community. Even after elder residents began to forge a life for themselves, the energy investment and commitment of work was often imperceptibly a part of life. Such a perspective shapes worldviews and influences ethics and related value judgements. In Chapter Six, elder residents bring their ethics and the associated values to bear, considering and judging current social and economic structures, and often finding them wanting.

4.2.3 – Progress and improvement

The custom and structure of life usually meant one of two things. Either individuals would take over the farm or ranch on which they or their spouse was raised, or the couple

²⁶ Written in a letter to me, February 2005.

purchased land to ranch or farm, much as their parents or siblings. While we were discussing working on the land, *Jean* reminded me, “Well, we had to do it. What else were we going to do? We had no education to, to go into something. That’s all we knew how to do.”

Certainly, the demands of life and survival were satisfied by continued work on the ranch or farm. At the same time, settlers and their children were in Saskatchewan and Canada to improve their lives, seeking to satisfy their own needs in accordance with the policies of a growing country. I asked *Mike* about beginning work on his own farm and his explanation of this continuity and the investment it reflected:

Mike: *No, no. I farmed with my father until I got married. And after a year, after I got married, you had to start looking ahead for your own family. So, up to that point, it was mainly horse power. Horse power, and then it was – before I got married – I was able to accumulate enough money to buy a small tractor. And we went into a sort of a power, more or less power farming. From there on, it went into combines and using a tractor instead of horses to pull a binder. So it sort of evolved, from one to the other.*

Lee: *And so, in many ways, the farming, it was just a job to you and just work that you had to get done?*

Mike: *Oh yeah, you sort of walked in unintentionally to ... there was nothing else to do. That’s where you had some investment already.... [Y]ou had invested in the machines already and you had already invested in the knowledge in different areas. ... Usually there would be a demand for certain things in the RM [Rural Municipality]. ... So they say, okay, let’s get somebody from the university to explain this to us. So, they’d write to them and they were quite good, usually correspond and arrange, okay we’ll have these classes for farmers that wanted to [learn]...*

The spirit with which many invested time and energy was guided by the need to make a living, taking advantage of available resources in terms of knowledge and skill. With this, *Mike* learned trades such as welding and carpentry. The “Better Farming Trains” I mentioned in Chapter Two featured in the efforts of those aiming to improve the land. There was a freedom of sorts to draw on that stock of know-how. The manipulation of this know-how fuelled a resourcefulness and ingenuity. This resourcefulness, for example, symbolised a connection to a taken for granted way

of knowing and living.

Similarly, the sense of freedom and autonomy charged the actions of some individuals and encouraged them to do as *Mike* did. For instance, living and working on a ranch near Val Marie, *Martin* explained the shape of this freedom:

Martin: *Well the first things I did was during the summer of '62, I built fifteen dams.... There was no water, reserve water. And I just went ahead. I got some surveyors, but most of them I surveyed myself. All they did was go out there and just give me the level, like for the spillway. They didn't even have to stake it.*

Such efforts and sources of meaning merged with others such as those of the government. For the government, the meaning it instituted in its lattice of roads and rail, for instance, revolved around the idea of “improving.”

Improvement to the government was, as Rod Bantjes (2005) explained, guided by a vision of pervasive and long-standing pastoral ideals. Moreover, the legal nature of land tenure encouraged individual ownership and residence (Bantjes 2005). Within this instituted ideal, there was room to manoeuvre. The institutional ideals of the government could sit amicably with how “improvement” manifested itself for farmers and ranchers such as *Mike* and *Martin* – it meant freedom and an independence to make a life for themselves.

For farmers and ranchers in Saskatchewan, improvement was played out on what was effectively an empty canvas. Some of these women and men were building a new life and as one of the people described to me, it was like “coming to a bare naked place”:

Robert *Yeah, so we pushed along quite a ways ... always ... there's always ... you had to always keep on building because they didn't have no shop so we had to set up a shop. Big shop for machinery shop and bins and so it was always evolving into building. Building. Because you come to bare naked place, there's nothing there. You have to work from scratch.*

Lee: *And how did that feel, I guess?*

Robert: *Oh it was a good feeling because you knew what you were doing was for*

yourself. If you're working out on a job, you're working, but it's not for yourself. You're working for somebody. I guess, you're your own boss.... Everything you do, it's always an improvement to your property. To yourself and your family, eh.

The words of Wallace Stegner place into context what some of these individuals felt at the time. Stegner (2000, 28) explains how “... the assumption of all of [them], child or adult, was that this was a new country and that a new country has no history.” Of course the area had been long inhabited by First Nations. But their indelible mark on the landscape was either unintelligible to settlers or, recalling the words of John Warnock (2004), had been removed by the government, an effort to provide what was tantamount to an empty canvas.

In Hafford, *Mike* spoke of how fellow residents would collect pine tree seedlings when they travelled to communities like Prince Albert or Big River. Upon returning, they would re-plant the trees on their own land. Similarly, several people in Val Marie explained how the trees that lined streets and avenues along which I walked had all been planted by former residents. Progress and improvement, and the meaningful reward for time and energy it signifies, was and largely remains, symbolised in the farmyards, windbreaks, and leafy streets and avenues of communities such as Val Marie and Hafford.

Hence, flush with the hopes and dreams invigorated by new technology, horses giving way to steam and diesel, some of the men and women spoke of the feeling of achievement that accompanied steps toward improving their circumstances. For *Daniel* and *Rose*, they were breaking the land “one tree at a time” and readying it for cultivation. For farmers, this aim was, and continues to be, a goal worthy of the considerable time and energy invested in the endeavour.

***Rose:** No, we used to do our breaking. [We] would take our lunch along, go in the morning. We'd take our lunch along and [my husband] was on the tractor. I'd put the rope around the tree and [he] would start the tractor. The tree would fall. I'd take the chain off. That's how we did our breaking. One tree at a time. And now they have bulldozers. But you know, we used to have ... we enjoyed it! He'd back up and I'd take*

the chain off and I'd go to another tree and we'd put the chain on and he'd start the tractor and go. And that's how ... You understand?

Lee: *Yeah, but when you say you enjoyed it, for what reasons do you say?*

Rose: *Well I don't know, the time went by and it was improving. We were making progress. We were ... the following year we made a crop out of that. Otherwise, it was trees. You know, it was progress. We ... I don't know, we enjoyed, we enjoyed. And we always worked together. We always did everything together.*

As a meaningful endeavour, this couple were “improving” the land, a vision they shared with countless others, as well as a government eager to provide the means – land and resources of knowledge and technology. The meanings were mutual and largely conducive to the natural talents of the individuals with whom I spoke, their resourcefulness, independence, and ingenuity.

Rose of Hafford also exemplified the value of resourcefulness and ingenuity. It was a “do-it-yourself” philosophy emerging from simple necessity. Starting out and making a living was no easy task for some. *Rose* told me of getting married and beginning to forge a life. She and *Daniel* owned one cow, some chickens, a half-section of land. They lived in a log house plastered with mud, and, ever-ingenious, *Rose* had cupboards made from apple boxes that were piled one on top of the other and graced with curtains that *Rose* had made.

Similarly, near Val Marie, *Martin* and *Laura* explained how there were no roads when they began work on their own ranch. Recognising the need and drawing on resourcefulness, ingenuity, and independence, the solution was relatively clear. *Martin* answered the need and built his own roads with a “Cat”²⁷ and scraper. When I asked if that was the circumstance for everyone, he mentioned that he and his family were “more or less independent and did our own work.” Nearer to Val Marie, there had been severe flooding in 1952 and as a result, the “flat”²⁸ was awash. Seeing this as an opportunity, *Pierre* recounted how he and his brother had built a

27 This is the common name for a tractor that many of the farmers and ranchers use. It is the shortened form for the heavy equipment sold by the “Caterpillar” corporation.

boat to ferry people around the area.

Pierre: *And we used to build ourselves some boats, my brother and I. And we used to transport the people from right up town, the farmers that live out in the country, well they were living in town here, but they had their animals and their chores to do out there. So we built a boat and we'd traffic them across. ... And then we used to take our boat from just on the street here and travel the mail. We did that for four months. ... The whole flat. It was under water. Just like a big lake. We were just on a little chunk of dirt. That was the only way you could get out.*

Lee: *[Y]ou must have been completely isolated. Just an island.*

Pierre: *Oh yeah, well they had to sandbag the track here and keep the water from going any higher. There was about three feet of water all over the flat here and north, all over. Some houses, there was two feet of water in it. And all the people along the river, it was the same thing in the low area, there.*

Lee: *[H]ow long did that last? How long did it take for that to go down?*

Pierre: *Oh about a month.*

Lee: *And so that's just some ingenuity on your part to go build a boat [laugh].*

Pierre: *Yeah, built it out of burlap and paint.*

The independence and ingenuity present in the sentiments of *Pierre*, *Martin*, and *Laura* embrace a freedom of sorts. When we were discussing his return to farming after having left, *Robert* expressed the sentiment: "Well, I was ... once you're a farm boy, your blood is ... you're still yearning for the farm. Gee, the freedom – being your own boss." The freedom permitted *Pierre* and *Martin* and many others like them to identify a problem and then find the solution, drawing on their own resourcefulness and ingenuity. Again, their values were guided by the same objectives as people such as Anthony Tyson or countless other settlers who felt the weight of promise when balancing the challenges and value of their land. The meaning they wrested from

²⁸ This is the common term used to refer to the bottom area of the valley in which Val Marie is located. This weather event occurred in April of 1952. The *Encyclopaedia of Saskatchewan* provides information on the flood that affected most of Saskatchewan and can be accessed at http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/floods_and_flood_control.html (Last accessed 8 May, 2008).

work at the time was securely under the aegis of progress and improvement.

Still, the freedom was conditional. When the elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie were breaking their land or making cupboards from apple boxes, their freedom to do so was not impeded by alternative meanings. Thus, the freedom relied upon the harmonious meanings that linked their intentions and objectives with those of others, such as the government. Current changes in agriculture, government, and the flagging economies of their communities yield more diverse and discordant meanings.

Over recent decades, the changes affecting agriculture have been characteristic of the forces of “industrial capitalism” (Braverman 1974, 273). These changes, such as the adoption of machinery that requires less people to operate, were overtaking farming and ranching much as they had done in other industries as early as the seventeenth century with the drawn out Industrial Revolution (Braverman 1974). Frank Ackerman (1998, 3) refers to the position of E.P. Thompson, who argued how preindustrial work was task-oriented and bound to the rhythms of nature in contrast to the regular, disciplined, time oriented industry or bureaucracy. The norms and necessities of life for settlers and their children, many of the women and men with whom I spoke, meant the weight of change was held at bay.

Nonetheless, the worldview of elder residents that was shaped by the meanings they derived from their cultural landscape also influenced their ethics. Meanings that elder residents share in Chapter Six are indicative of their ethics. And as Chapter Six will explore for instance, the ethics of elder residents have led some to pronounce judgment on actions that appear to prevent meaningful freedom, independence, and ingenuity. Chapter Seven, in turn, takes a closer look at how meanings exemplified above are sufficiently important to actively sustain and continue.

4.3 – Synopsis

The meaningful activities of elder residents when they were younger infused the lives of these men and women when they had grown older and were farming or ranching. For example, the meaning they derived from work in the cultural landscape when they were younger contributed to a worldview that is demonstrated in their later lives.

Whether using apple boxes for cupboards or building dams, boats or roads, elements of independence, resourcefulness, ingenuity, and self-sufficiency existed. Such attributes, and the memories of these attributes at work, help strengthen the ties connecting the elder residents to their cultural landscape. The ties have, over the years, reflected investment of time and energy and commitment; hence, they have been sources of meaning.

Complementing the discussion above, the following chapter explores meanings elder residents derive from the complexities and “feel” of their community (Bauman 2001, 1) as well as meanings related to an affinity with the land. The meanings discussed in Chapter Five are also emblematic of the worldviews that contribute to the ethics of elder residents, influential in the meanings addressed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONNECTIONS – HOME, COMMUNITY, AND THE LAND

5.1 – Defining community: Routine and responsibility

5.1.1 – Coming together

The narratives of elder residents convey facets of community, namely uniqueness, togetherness, a place of family, familiarity, and equality (Fitchen 1991). Admittedly, individuals and communities may have not always met these ideals. However, the recognition alone of the qualities gives insight into the meanings of individuals and by extension, their worldviews. The following indicates how elder residents have defined their communities.

In addition to bonds of community offered by recreational events, a common sense of time in terms of work hours, religious observances, habits, and customs helped to create the emotional connections and create community (Jackson 1994). For individuals in and around Hafford and Val Marie, a shared sense of time provided a sense of unity. Their lives were similarly connected to the rigours of agriculture and their work was uniformly tied to the ebb and flow of the climate or more earth-bound political or economic currents – a rigour of a different kind. These routines have helped to secure bonds that individuals would have had with their cultural landscape. In so doing, the accustomed routines became part of the worldviews that characterise meanings that have shaped the lives of elder residents.

In Val Marie, the performance, pursuit, and enjoyment of music blended recreation with necessity. Music helped to ease lives structured by work at the same time as supplementing the income awarded by such endeavours. *Diane* explained how her family was and remains

committed to music. The enjoyment and sustenance that performing offered was a source of community cohesion that traversed the border between Canada and the United States. Similarly, *Liz* and *Chris* in Val Marie told me of how they would attend dances in the United States. *Chris* explained:

Chris: *The first time I was in Val Marie was in 1968 and I liked the little town. ... [I]n those days, it was the last of the wild west. Every Friday night there was a dance – dine and dance. And either here in Val Marie or Orkney or Bracken or ... in those days, they'd hold the border open so you could go down to Montana and you could have a ... like they'd have a dance in Loring. So you'd go down there and you'd have your dance and when you come back, the border would be open, they'd let you come home. But they pretty well knew everybody ...*

Regardless of the travel involved, community events have formed meaningful memories. The men and women in and around Val Marie would gather for dances and other recreation, often in the country schools. The perspectives *Lilian* shared with me were drawn from memories of what she was told by older members of her family:

Lilian: *Oh, there certainly was a lot of neighbourliness and get-together even though people didn't travel as far and wide even fifty years ago as they do now. There was a great comradeship between neighbours. They had to stick together because you just had one another and even I don't understand the full impact of what that meant because I was younger than my older siblings were. I don't remember any of this because I was born later. I was the youngest of the family. But I remember my parents and step-father talking about them going to social events at the local country school and the children would go along. Like my older siblings would have gone along and maybe be laid on the floor in the corner while they danced. They push the school desks aside and they danced. There was a great, so I was told, comradeship in those former rural schoolhouses.*

Various forms of recreation offered a quick side-step away from weekly work routines. Alongside the events that took place in community halls or the schoolhouses, other customs

punctuated the weeks, months, and seasons. These customs included sports days, travelling fairs, or as *Dave* mentioned, the theatre in Val Marie offering the “evening out” on Thursday or Friday.

Periodic events such as the theatre or travelling fairs helped ease the shifts in the contours of community. For those living in or near both Hafford and Val Marie, “Saturday Night” had also been a custom individuals such as *Mariya* mentioned. Stores remained open, and as a social event, it provided a time for the bonds of community to be reaffirmed and strengthened. *Mariya*, whose family farmed and lived outside of the town, recalled the memory:

***Mariya:** Yeah, we’ve lived here all our life and I enjoy it and we had our family. Back when we grew up, we went to town Saturday nights. It was a big thing, Saturday night. Stores stayed open at that time, too. Midnight.*

The commonalities of life included those who lived beyond the political boundaries of towns or villages. Communities of farmers or ranchers, albeit geographically more distant from one another, also existed. *Zoé* referred to her family’s community when she was growing up. The territories were vast and measured at scales of quarters and sections.²⁹ However, they comprised communities.

At the same time, *Marthe* of Val Marie explained how she and her family were so-called “town farmers” who lived in the town and farmed in the surrounding area. The “town farmers” would have been members of communities bound by a singularity of purpose related to life in the towns and villages. However, the mutable contours of the community would have also granted them membership in the communities of which *Zoé* speaks. The common challenges and rewards of their work, either farming or ranching, provided a source of meaning that infused the cultural

29 A section is 1 square mile (640 acres) while a “quarter” is ¼ square mile of land (160 acres) or a “quarter section.” When Saskatchewan was being divided and land sold in the 19th century to “settlers,” the Dominion Lands Act of 1872 established the survey system that still exists today. The quadrilateral sections, ranges, and townships were adopted from the model used in the United States (McKercher 2006).

landscape. Consequently, the commonalities helped to create a sense of community. Whether from the town or countryside, individuals shared a daily round that gathered common attributes of life within its compass, whether it be the routines of farming or ranching, sports days or "Saturday Night."

In so doing, the common routine and sense of time reduced potential disjunctions between the various communities, creating social intersections that allowed the boundaries of communities to converge. As *Emile* of Val Marie shared, part of the fun he had as a child tracked along these intersections and contours:

Emile: I guess it was a meeting between the town and the country kids. It was ... maybe not all of them because we were close, I guess that's why. And a lot of my friends lived across the tracks and so it wasn't ... We'd create our own swords and go and make our own bow and arrows and cedar, cut strips off the old cedar posts and make ...

Similarly, *Mike* in Hafford remembered attending concerts at the Community Hall or school. These events brought him and his family together with others whose lives and experiences travelled similar paths – the rigours of farming, ranching, or other commonalities of life. The following vignette demonstrates the blend of social, cultural, political, and economic objectives that characterised events at these community get-togethers:

Mike: Anyhow, so they built these halls for recreation. ... [T]hat was about the time that the Pool [Saskatchewan Wheat Pool] was starting to organise and there was a man by the name of Stratychuk, that was a Pool organiser. He would come out, trying to sell this idea of the Pool to the people in the area and he would bring a projector and a film to bring the people in. Okay, so everybody knew there was a free film; they were willing to go. Everybody would go. Whole families came. So he would show the first part of the film and then he'd speak forever. ... The older people were interested, but the ladies that had small children were impatient because the children wanted to see the end of the film and the film was something about Charlie Chaplin and a skunk and stuff like that [laugh]. And they wanted to know how things came out, whether the skunk got out of the culvert. Did he do any damage? Anyhow, finally my Auntie said, 'Mr. Stratychuk, could you please continue [laugh] with the film because my children want to go to sleep.'

The memory brings a smile and reflects how these artistic expressions were part of life, helping to bring community members together and shape the communities as a whole. Memories of individuals and families coming together at concerts or dances reveal aspects worldviews that fuel the ethics of elder residents: what is right and wrong. Their ethics give light to meanings and value judgements in Chapter Six that reflect a separation from the cultural landscape. For instance, *Mike* expresses disillusionment with the current agricultural system that can pit neighbour against neighbour. His assessment can be traced to lessons instilled in him, symbolised by memories such as those above.

5.1.2 – Familiar and equal

In addition to cementing the bonds among individuals within the communities, the array of gatherings punctuating the weekly or yearly round also affirmed a valued sense of familiarity and equality. For instance, *Jean* and *Natalie* in Hafford commented on the equality in the community when they were younger. In comparison to present circumstances with large farms interspersed amidst smaller ones, they remembered how everyone lived on smaller farms³⁰ and faced similar challenges in making a living. Their perspectives of a more ideal past contributes to their ethics and value judgements. Chapter Six addresses how the deliberations of elder residents have led to meanings that reflect a separation from the cultural landscape in which communities are not defined by equality.

But memories of a more egalitarian time are meaningful in ways that similarly affect the worldviews of elder residents. For individuals such as *Gail* and *Matthew* in Hafford or *Kay* and *Chris* in Val Marie, the importance of doors being left unlocked was a defining and important

³⁰ Most farms were either a quarter or two quarters in size.

attribute of community. As with other rural communities, doors left unlocked is considered characteristic of rural life and a symbol of trust (Fitchen 1991).

In and around Hafford and Val Marie, with many individuals involved in agriculture, this trust also manifested in the provision of food. *Jean-Michel* told me in tones that avowed its importance – one does not let others go hungry:

Jean-Michel: *You never leave nobody [to] go hungry. No. I know at my place, nobody went hungry. No matter who'd come in, you feed them. ...*

Lee: *... would you say that that has something to do with farming?*

Jean-Michel: *On the farm, we've always got something to eat. I don't care. It's not like in the city that you've got to run to the store to buy something. On the farm, we've got meat, potatoes. We've always got meat and potatoes. So that's why I say on the farm, we always got something to eat.*

The words of *Jean-Michel* are born of a knowledge and appreciation of the meaningful connection between exertion or, recalling the words of David Korotkov (1998, 55), “energy and time invested,” and the food he is willing to share.

Correspondingly, *Robert* in Hafford spoke of the bonds he feels toward the land. We were speaking about where he lives and what comes to his mind when I say the word “land” to him. As part of his response, he explained the importance and value of being able to offer food:

Robert: *We've travelled a little bit, even when we're on the farm yet. We went through Alberta, B.C., through the mountains and people say, 'Oh, look how beautiful.' I found nothing beautiful there. It's just rock for me is rock. It's a rock while you're looking at it. The road through there is just terrible. The wife was just horrified going through those curves and all this. And I wasn't too brave either after because, I don't know what they like in those hills and live, right ... in those Rocky Mountains. Beautiful. There's nothing beautiful about it. It's a rock. Is a rock. Maybe on a picture, they're beautiful. But to live, no, no, no. I like my open prairies. Land.*

Lee: *And that's what comes to your mind when I say that.*

Robert: *That is. To my heart, to my mind, yeah. It's the land that produces your bread and butter ... the backbone of the world actually is your farming and communities. Feed the countries.*

Robert's narrative not only captures the value and responsibility of providing food for people, but he also demonstrates how the contours of the community include the immediate face-to-face community as well as the imagined community. The willingness to shoulder the responsibility to “feed the countries” is one of the methods by which he finds meaning in his cultural landscape. A central value of land is its function as the “backbone of the world.” To *Robert* in Hafford and *Jean-Michel* near Val Marie, land equals the value and responsibility of providing food.

The fundamental need for food is a value we cannot dispute. However, it is not simply providing the food that solidifies the bond. That bond is also secured by the work or the toil merged with the responsibility to provide a fundamental need for human beings. After all, the farmer who knows the connection between efforts made during the day and the food gracing the table at night “... enjoys a degree of psychological security unknown to people of other occupations (such as salesman or scholar) in which the linkages between exertion and the staff of survival are far more tenuous” (Tuan 1986, 39). Hence, the responsibility to provide food for their community – face-to-face and imagined – dovetails with meanings resulting from the work required to meet the need.

Alongside equality or the sense of responsibility to the community, familiarity was another attribute individuals valued. In Val Marie, *Jean-Michel* expressed the importance of this familiarity with people in the community – knowing faces and names. When we were discussing his comfort with where he lived, I asked if the comfort of familiarity had anything to do with the length of time he had lived in the area. But he responded, “No, I just like it out here. That’s it. If I go to Swift Current, you don’t know your neighbour. Here, I know everybody within forty miles.” *Pierre* in Val Marie also explained familiarity, but he did so in a way tied to both the land and the people within his community:

Pierre: I like the place. I like the scenery. It’s the thing that I was brought up with and it has stuck with me and I feel free. I want to go walk on my neighbour’s land, I know he’s

not going to boot me out. But you go in the big centres, in the cities there, oh you don't get off your yard there or you're going to get picked up. Well that's not my type of living.

For *Pierre*, his familiarity within his community speaks of the merits of knowing your own territory.

Familiar was also the word *Gordon* of Hafford used to explain his ties. Similar to *Pierre*, the cultural landscape is “familiar territory.” That territory is characterised by values such as the length of the day and the “wide open spaces” that permit that light to flow, unimpeded by mountains. He shared the following account in order to convey the sentiment:

Gordon: ...we're familiar. This is familiar territory. We were in the mountains here, I'm going to say twenty years ago, and we were coming and we were looking at the time and we were thinking, 'Oh, my goodness, here it is ...' It's already getting dark, and it was just about five-thirty or something like that ... This is in the middle of the summer. Sometimes it's July when the days are really quite long. But in the mountains, because the mountains are high, the sun is at a position now and is starting to get, you know the daylight by that time is getting shorter and the ... it was getting so, we're kind of looking at the time and we're thinking, we're not anywhere near getting out of the mountains yet. ... [I]t's dark. We might just stay. We'll probably have to stop and stay in Calgary and so we finally came around the corner. And if you know a bit of coming in that direction, we hit this top of the hill and we came out and the sun was there ... we drove to about eleven o'clock that night. We were suddenly closer. You know what I mean? Because back there it was night, it was night. It was dark already. And it was ... look at this, this is what we're used to ... And I think, that kind of light is what we're talking about. Like this is what we're used to, this is home ... And it's just that ... it's just that feeling that, it's ours.

As a designation of community, an aspect of territory helps define its edges – a river or a road (Reed 2003). Not exclusively, but importantly, this designates the territory from without. Still another aspect of territory, one intimated by *Gordon* in his account, reflects the attributes felt *within* that territory – the spill of light and the lie of the land. Given these ideas, the feeling of

ownership of territory inherent in *Gordon's* account also harbours a sense of reciprocity. The lie of the land and the length of the day are qualities that braid together with others such as those linked to the routines of day, week, or year.

5.1.3 – Synopsis

A number of threads of meaning run through the communities to which elder residents belong – responsibility, equality, familiarity. These threads are manifested in the variety of events that punctuate the week or year, an itinerary sanctioned by a commonality of time. A sense of responsibility to their communities is emboldened by the feeling of equality and familiarity. The need to not lock a door, for instance, symbolises these feelings. Why lock a door if everyone is known? Some individuals are motivated by their role within and responsibility to their communities – face-to-face and imagined. People like *Robert* or *Jean-Michel* take their responsibility to others for granted, and for them, such a responsibility means satisfying the fundamental need of food. Through this particular set of connections – responsibility, equality, familiarity – people are moored to their cultural landscape by way of meanings that comprise their ethics.

The meanings related to community that elder residents feel connect them to their cultural landscape are tested by changes in their cultural landscape. This has led to a sense of separation. In a changing cultural landscape, some elder residents feel a separation from community in which *not* everyone is known, equality cannot be assumed, or responsibility to one's neighbour is felt to be obstructed by the bottom line.

5.2 – Finding and being at home

For some of the elder residents, the idea of ageing in place and more importantly, feeling at home, was taken for granted and inevitable. The feeling of home often grew from that first 160

acres their parents purchased and continued as they began to build their homesteads.

Consequently, the original homesteads where they grew up and where work periodically merged with life, retained the aura of home for them. Even though some had moved to the homestead of their husband or wife or now, into the town or village, their feeling of home remained the place where they grew up. For instance, “down home” was where *Gail* was raised.

Adding to its complexity, like the idea of community, the contours of home can shift to include or exclude other locations. After leaving Hafford, where *Gordon* had grown up and where he and *Rosalyn* had previously worked and lived, they eventually returned. With this choice, they took up the mantle of continuity that had been momentarily shifted out of sight, but clearly not out of mind. Their decision was swayed by the closer familial connections, economic practicality, and the pursuit of a life with which *Gordon* and *Rosalyn* were familiar and sought for their children. The links with extended family available in Hafford were preferable to what they felt were potentially undesirable ones in the city in which they lived. The contours of home and the connections with people, places, and events could begin to re-form and strengthen while weakening in their former home and community.

Home and the meaning it engenders, once recognised and found, is unrivalled in its ability to secure people to place. *Audrey* has lived in Hafford for the majority of her life and her words symbolise this firm and heartfelt link to a place, to “ageing in place”:

***Audrey:** Ooh! This is my home. This-is-my-home. You have no idea. You can't have any idea of what it's like to be living in the house that I was born in. I still hear my mom and dad's voices in the house. Not physically, but talking. Telling me things. That's where I raised my family. I love it. I have a two story house and I ... my windows upstairs, they're not covered with lavish curtains. They have curtains on them, but they're just very, very skimpy so that when I go up there, the windows are ... I can look out of them, over the land. That's what I love. I just love it! That's what keeps me here.*

Her house is home, and as noted in Chapter One, the voices of her family still quietly echo in its

rooms and halls.

Tom also explored the idea of home when I expressed curiosity about the nature of the connection he felt to that part of the world. His perspective indicates how the feeling and idea of home also includes the physical land:

Tom: *I'll be coming back and it'll be one of those stellar – literally – nights, with the moon and the snow crisp and the roads crisp and I wish my relatives from down east, who have been here, but could ... have never seen that. Seen that absolute glory of this place when it's ... and the rolling hills and the moonlight on them and the stars and see ... I mean, this is paradise.*

His words illuminate the intangible meaning that brings relief to a cultural landscape, the entwining of a quality we can see and feel – stellar nights and the sound and feel of crisp snow. For individuals such as *Emile*, the idea of home also carries with it a feeling that is not restricted to a house or the town:

Emile: *Well home to me is my home right there, as it is. My house is my home. And my family, of course. Well home is here. Where we're comfortable and well, I don't know.*

Lee: *And so when you go out into the area around here, does that 'comfort zone' extend out there at all for you? Or not really.*

Emile: *Oh yeah. Sure it does. Because I know just about where everybody lives and whose land it is and whose animals are out there. I don't know them all, but ... And just the fact that I can go out there and be there and ride through it. That's home.*

Lee: *That's home.*

Emile: *Yeah.*

Lee: *Yeah, as I say, it's just interesting to see how far that extends I suppose or if it does extend. For some people it's going to be a little room or something and anything beyond that little room is 'out there.'*

Emile: *No, and it's probably got a lot to do with the history. As far back as I remember. It's all ... it's not all there. I forgot a lot of it, but I can remember a lot of Grandpas and a lot of people's grandpas and it's, I don't know how to explain it.*

Ironically, the inability of *Emile* to articulate the feeling of home is understandable for

individuals such as *Gordon* in Hafford. *Gordon* also described home as not only a house or a single location. Rather, it was the whole area, a composite of emotional connections that pervade the cultural landscape. Therefore, while home may be a *single* feeling, it is composed of a cocktail of meanings that contribute to the overall feeling and meaning of home.

When I asked *Lilian* about her impressions of home and its association with “land” for example, she described the overall feeling of home and then put to words what she feels is an inevitable intertwining of the two:

Lilian: Love, warmth, family, and the closeness that we were very, very fortunate to have had. Actually I've had people say to us, 'You really have a very special family.' We were a close extended family. We are a close family. 'Home' is the warm loving place where you're first loved, first nurtured, first educated. I don't mean in schooling, I mean in the untouchable things that you can't put your finger on. Values and caring about others. Neighbours.

Lee: Yeah all of those things come into your mind with that. And what would you say is the difference or the relationship or however ... link between those two, 'land' and 'home'? As I say, if it's possible to put a finger on that. If anything.

Lilian: Well, it's the same thing. If you have a loving relationship in your 'home', you have a loving relationship with the 'land' too, won't you? Just because you care for it. You want to take care of it. So you want to take care of your family and nurture that relationship and make it bloom and blossom and grow. So too the land.

Lilian's perspective is shared by several other elder residents. For instance, *Mark* and *Marianne* in Hafford would likely agree with *Lilian* in linking home innately to the land.

Clearly, the concept of home defines a complex relationship between ourselves and countless other elements: a place such as a house; a town, countryside, or the land; other people; events that have occurred there; the push from other homes we had found; or our wish to find “home.” In the words of Yi-Fu Tuan (1975, 154), home “... is the one place in which we can openly and comfortably admit our frailty and our bodily needs ... [T]o it we go when we are tired or sick, that is, when we can no longer maintain a brave front before the world.” *Richard* in

Hafford would certainly agree:

Richard: *Home to most people is the most prestigious, no matter what quality it is ... the most prestigious component of anyone's life, if I could put it that way, because that's where you go when you're tired. That's where you go to eat. That's where you go to sleep. That's where you go to get love from your dad and your mom or your brother or your wife. You don't get that all over. And it's a sense of ... of having.*

Albeit nebulous, home is a feeling that infuses the cultural landscape. The countless elements of meaning that go into creating the feeling will vary. As some researchers such as Jeanne Moore (2000) point out, we have many lists of meanings for home. A few of the people with whom I spoke in Val Marie commented how for them, home is “Wherever I hang my hat.” Such a sentiment suggests the potential mobility of the feeling – home can be found wherever we rest body and mind. Hence, finding home is defined as much by its search as it is for its discovery.

A comment that *Tom* made during our discussion seemed to capture the heart of the discovery of home. Speaking of Hafford, he confided how “If it's not the place that I've been looking for all my life to call home, it's awful close.” Once search is rewarded with discovery, the commitment to sustaining the myriad links that create home, to the community or the land, is undeniably strengthened.

The potency of the feeling of home plays a role in the ethics and related value judgements of elder residents. Subsequently, it also features strongly in the different responses to the development of the area in and around Hafford and Val Marie. Such development includes the formation of the RLBR and GNP. As the coming chapters will explore, the divergent approach to the biosphere reserve and the park relate to the nature of and sustainability of the feeling of home.

5.3 – Synopsis

According to the elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie, the idea and meaning of home represents an emotional connection that is as strong as it is diverse. Some elder residents highlighted how the feeling cannot be readily pinpointed, and besides, the idea of home is not restricted to a structure or a single place. In this way, when asked to describe their idea of home and its contrast with land, some expressed how the two are indistinguishable. To emphasise the feel of home, one that is not tied specifically to a tangible place, *Diane* commented how home is where you happen to settle yourself.

At its broadest significance, though, the culmination of those countless elements of meaning answer only one critical and convoluted question in our hearts and minds – do we want to go or stay? For those with whom I spoke, the answer is unquestionably the latter. Their convictions translate into a worldview that lends strength and vehemence to their ethics. These attributes impact meanings that reflect separation from the cultural landscape. In some cases, it is the potential loss of home and the many and varied emotional connections it entails that contributes to the meanings some elder residents derive from their cultural landscape. Moreover, in Chapter Seven, the attributes that contribute to the meaning of home represents what some elder residents wish to actively continue.

5.4 – Affinity with the land

5.4.1 – Nature

With enthusiasm and conviction, several of the elder residents conveyed the value of the wildlife and wildflowers that coloured their days and years. The link with the “natural” world counts as particularly important in the brocade of meanings that comprise the cultural landscape. For instance, *Gordon* and *Rosalyn* explained how a source of meaning stems from their relationship with nature:

Gordon: ... and it's just amazing as you travel down these little lanes and things that aren't travelled on very often. The wildlife and all the birds that you can identify and you cannot believe the number of ducks and birds and things that live in this community. To most people, they were ducks, but you can ... mallards, pintails, you just go on and on and on and on and on ...

Rosalyn: ... scoters.

Gordon: And then we also had some very interesting people stop by. We're still in contact with them, from the States. They were sent out to Redberry Lake. Redberry Lake has the Scoters ... and the only place, there's one lake in Alberta and Redberry Lake in Saskatchewan. That's the only place that these ducks would nest ...

Like the length of the day or the parade of events that have characterised Hafford, for *Gordon* and *Rosalyn*, the presence of the birds and their choice to nest on Redberry Lake holds meaning. Similarly, near Hafford, *Jessica* explored this deep-seated part of her life, conveying her connection with "nature." As part of our discussion, I asked *Jessica* what places she would want to show me in her cultural landscape:

Jessica: Except for gardening, of course, I love gardening. I love growing flowers and vegetables ... I like going for walks and I love nature. I love the birds and butterflies and everything. So when [laugh] I grow flowers, I make sure that I grow flowers that attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

Lee: And so nowadays, where do you go for walks? Where?

Jessica: Oh, I go for walks just on the back road north of my place. It's a back road where there are a lot of trees and I see a lot of nature. I see many birds, I see the Hungarian partridge and prairie chickens ...

Lee: ... [I]f we were able to drive around the area and maybe up to where you live, what would you ... what would you want to show me?

Jessica: I'd show you the beautiful nature of this place. There are many pretty sites. You don't have to go very far where the nature can capture you. It's always flatter and you drive a few miles east of here and then you have the rolling hills. A little further north you have rolling hills. More trees. So, what would I say? That's what I would be showing you and of course, I would take you to Redberry Lake because I still think we are very fortunate to have that lake and it's a very relaxing atmosphere, a place where you can enjoy nature at its best. It is natural. So I would definitely recognise that place

as a very worthwhile thing ... place to enjoy nature.

Jessica explained how the meaningful connection she feels to this aspect of her cultural landscape relates, in part, to the presence of birds such as the Hungarian partridge or the prairie chickens. Amidst the rolling hills, the trees, and the lake and alongside the everyday acts of gardening or walking, nature is a part of *Jessica's* environment and likewise, she can be a part of that nature. Through these connections, people such as *Jessica* derive meaning from their cultural landscape.

For elder residents such as *Adèle* and *Pierre* in Val Marie, these sentiments would raise a smile of agreement. *Adèle* and *Pierre* told me of the wildflowers and wildlife they encounter on their farm:

Pierre: *We've got gooseberries, black currants. We've got saskatoons, strawberries. It's all wild and I know all the spots where they are.*

Adèle: *And then I have my babies that come to see me every year.*

Pierre: *We've got a bunch of little ...*

Adèle: *Bush bunnies.*

Pierre: *Bush rabbits*

Adèle: *They're gorgeous*

Pierre: *Oh yeah, we sit outside, have a cup of coffee and they come and they walk on your feet.*

Adèle: *[laugh] One thing I don't like is the gophers.*

Pierre: *Wildlife up there is great.*

Lee: *And that's all part of what you value?*

Pierre: *Oh yeah. You go in the city, you don't see that. All you see in the city is cement sidewalk and black pavement for streets. You don't see Mother Nature. And then in the hot sun in the summertime, burns your feet. No, not for me.*

Similar to *Jessica*, the closeness of nature is the means by which *Adèle* and *Pierre* hold value in their relationship with their cultural landscape. The fact that *Pierre* knows the location of all the spots where berries grow on their land reflects a meaningful connection and familiarity that

connects him to his home-land and “Mother Nature.”

The wildlife and wildflowers are the ever-present symbols of their connection with nature. This relationship contributes to the uniqueness of the cultural landscape in part because it offers a connection that is not to be found in cities. To have wild flowers and wildlife be a part of the world in which the daily routines are played out breaks down the perceived barrier between the location of “nature” and that of “culture.” For elder residents such as *Adam* and *Heather*, the presence of deer who appear in their yard – elements of nature crossing the perceived barrier – has elicited a sense of privilege. Such sentiments are indicative of a respect for, and affinity with, the flora and fauna of the land.

Such a measure of respect and affinity also pervaded the words of those who sought to heed “Mother Nature.” Much like *Pierre*, other elder residents have also worked on ranches or farms for decades. Their daily experience has included compromise and concession with the caprice of weather. As *Scott* near Val Marie assured me, that part of the world is a “harsh country.” He added, “There’s not a lot of room for mistakes,” when telling me about those who came in the early days, at the beginning of the twentieth century during the “Golden Age” of ranching. These words chime with those of *Martin*, a long-time rancher who explained to me how, despite the harshness of the country, the cattle, as part of nature, are the best arbiters – “Nature takes its course.” The caring of the cattle, building dams, or any of the countless actions that are part of ranching must all sit in accord with “Mother Nature” – “Everything’s got to be with Mother Nature.”

Individuals such as *Martin* offer a glimpse of a connection that elder residents such as *Stephen* near Hafford have refined over decades spent observing and learning of the subtle nuances of nature. Nature is an entity whether reflected in wildflowers along the side of the road and deer in the back yard or a broader conception, such as “Mother Nature.” Regardless, the relationship is defined by its connection with an aspect of the cultural landscape that is unaltered

by humanity (Castree 2000) and is beyond the control of people. This element of 'wildness' beyond humanity may contribute to the value and nature of the relationship. In a letter written to me in February 2005, *Stephen* provides one aspect of this relationship:

***Stephen:** I have this (almost devout) love for the seasons. In each there is a particular beauty. The less artificially manipulated a farm the better on it to experience the functions of the seasons. Harvest, especially, is appreciated as such a natural process, the fruits of our labour. (Eating “in season” for example, furthers that appreciation.) [I have re-produced, verbatim, the words and punctuation of this portion of Stephen's letter.]*

The web of meanings *Stephen* derives from his relationship with nature as part of the cultural landscape is characterised by several elements, some of which hearken to the earlier discussion. Interwoven with a link to nature or “natural processes” are the fruits of labour. As a source of meaningfulness noted by David Korotkov (1999), it is the time and energy invested in working, for *Stephen*, in *accordance* with nature. To be “less artificially manipulated” is reminiscent of other elder residents including *Martin* who expressed how everything has to be with “Mother Nature.” However, the meaningful connection of which *Stephen* speaks also reflects a deep-seated link or unity with the land.

5.4.2 – Unity with the land

In addition to *Stephen*, other elder residents in and around Val Marie and Hafford feel a relationship with the natural part of their cultural landscape that is akin to a unity with the land. For some, this unity is with “nature” while for others, it is a unity with the land. Still for others, it is their work with the land – farming or ranching – that provides the means by which they merge at times, indistinguishably, with the land.

Although *Mike* does not couch his comments in terms of unity with the land, he uses another that integrates self, land, and nature – to be “inside” the land. Like many of the others

with whom I spoke, *Mike* has farmed for decades around Hafford. As part of our sometimes emotionally-charged conversation, he shared a vignette that described an evening on which he was working in the field:

Mike: Well, when I first got my land ... you walk on it. It's yours.

Lee: Tell me more about that, how did that feel?

Mike: It feels good [an emotional pause].

Lee: It feels pretty good, hey.

Mike: And it didn't matter what it was, it was rocky, but it was yours.

Lee: Yeah, yeah. That's a wonderful thought. That's a wonderful thought.

Mike: And from time to time, you went and sort of explored it. The inside of it and ... You had coyotes on it. You had deer. And one night, I was working late in the night. All of a sudden, there's this big thing appears in front of the tractor. Big horns. And I practically woke up on the tractor and stopped it. A moose ... Out of where! Nobody ever had no moose in here. There was a moose in front of me. And the first thing ... thought to me. It scared the hell out of you because there was nobody around. It was twelve o'clock midnight, maybe two o'clock in the morning. But there was a moose in that field. But the deer were off and they were criss-crossing and stuff. You practically say 'hi' to them. Rabbits, coyotes ...

Perhaps, to be “inside” the land is to be a *part* of that land, alongside the moose, rabbits, and coyotes, as well as the tractor and the night. This vignette followed his ruminations about the land he had owned. To be inside the land is wedded to the idea of ownership. Similar to the ideas *Gordon* and *Madeline* shared previously about territory and belonging, the ownership of the land cannot be understood solely in terms of an accountant's ledger. Rather, it is part of a reciprocal ownership, wherein individuals such as *Mike* own the land. But to be inside the land is to acknowledge the land “owns” in return.

For *Mike*, the land may have been less than ideal. Still, it was his land. His words are reminiscent of Edna Tyson Parson (1981). To recall, she wrote about her father, Anthony Tyson, and how he and others alike struggled to establish homes on new land “... where it is possible to sign a document, fulfil a contract and actually own land upon which they laboured.” Such were

the circumstances for people such as *Mike* and other elder residents with whom I spoke. Their forebears had responded to the meanings the Dominion of Canada was laying, grid-like, on to the land. With his narrative, *Mike* interweaves the different filaments of ownership – the kind that was sealed with ink is woven together with a more reciprocal ownership, one that reaches deeper into the heart for its place of inscription.

Other individuals in and around both Val Marie and Hafford also expressed these sentiments. When I spoke with *Stephen*, he commented how he considers himself to be part of the land. Accordingly, he has permitted plants and animals that live in that area to 'reclaim' his farmland. In the letter he sent, *Stephen* explained how as a source of meaning his bond with the land expresses itself in terms of farming:

***Stephen:** From my earliest years these farms were a place of adventure; even today there always is some niche to discover, something new to see, the plants, rocks, whatever else. There also is the opportunity – if one were to farm on this small scale, as some in organics might – to try new methods of cultivation for instance, to plant different crops, and so on. Furthermore, there is the endless parade of the weather systems, in any season, always different, ever changing. And always visible, for the wide horizon, for the absence of the sky-scraper, ... add to that the quiet, with some bird-song, and there's the reason to be here.*

These sentiments are mirrored in the heartfelt words of *Zoé*. She grew up on a ranch in the Wood Mountain uplands, an area east of Val Marie. When I asked *Zoé* what comes to mind when I say the word “land” to her, she offered her explorations of the idea:

***Zoé:** What comes to my mind is a vast stretch of prairie with hardly any fences and lots of hills and valleys and coulees and places where ... places that have natural purposes. This is where the eagle always nested and this is where the antelope had their young and a lot of it comes in relationship. Maybe because I was a woman and had children or because I am a woman and have had children. I think of where the prairie chickens ... it isn't just the land that comes to my mind, it's the land covered with grass. If you say 'land' to me, I don't see a field. I don't see summerfallow. I don't see towns built on it. I just see empty ... What other people might think are empty spaces that are not empty at*

all that is so full of vegetation and so full of wildlife and so full of sound and music. It's not empty.

During our conversation, Zoé responded to my curiosity regarding how she understands her relationship with nature in particular. In some regards, it rings true with the idea of deep ecology, whereby, the relation between the 'self' and nature is indistinguishable. Similar to Zoé and the perspectives of Stephen in Hafford, indistinguishability "... rejects boundaries between self and nature. Humans are said to be one strand in the biotic web" (Plumwood 2001, 98). Figure 9 gives a pictorial sense of the grassland in the GNP with which Zoé feels indistinguishable. She reflects on these ideas:

Zoé: It's this combination of the elements. All of these things living in this prairie habitat. I don't see a forest. It's always interesting; my mom and dad would go on trips sometimes without us children. Because they had so many of us and they needed to get away and to have a little bit of break from all these children in the family. ... And then they would come home and I remember my mother and father coming home from Banff, the first time they ever went there. And they brought these marvellous pictures of Banff that some painter had painted. And they put them on our walls. It was twenty years before they hung a picture of the prairie on their walls. I have never had a picture of mountains on my walls. What landscape I brought in. Look at that barren prairie that's right in the middle of our pasture. There's a little Rock Creek³¹ runs right through that patch of bush and then there's some buffalo berry bushes growing there and a lot of sage on the ground and the sparse little bit of grass. And no, when I see nature, it's the combination. It's all of those things being there together. And in a sense, because I've been there too, it's almost like if you say 'nature,' like I see myself there too. I don't just see that as something out there. I see myself in it – in the middle of it.

31 See Thelma Poirier's book *Rock Creek* (Regina: Coteau Books, 1998) in which Thelma explores her relationship to the places in her cultural landscape in greater depth.



Figure 9: Photograph of the prairie grassland around Val Marie (Source: Lee Everts).

Being a part of the land as depicted by *Zoé*, *Mike*, and *Stephen* may hinge upon intangible meanings. Regardless, its impact yields a palpable sense of belonging. *Madeline* also captures this intangible “feel” of a landscape in the following vignette. She shares the intense feeling of belonging and a sense of place that imparts meaning into her relationship with the cultural landscape:

Madeline: *Well we were camping in Cypress Hills and my little sister and I, we decided to go for a walk. So we walk and we walk and we walk and we climbed the hill and we climbed and climbed and climbed. And suddenly we come on the top ... out of the valley of Cypress Hills onto the top of the hills like. And there's a great big long flat prairie just like I'm used to and it gave me such a queer feeling. And that's where I discovered I was a prairie girl [laugh]. I wasn't one of these forest, a tree and a tree and a tree. I was a prairie girl. It wasn't conscious. It [sigh] assaulted me [laugh].*

Lee: *And that was when you were still living in Ponteix.*³²

Madeline: *Yeah. And I was young, I would say fourteen, maybe thirteen, fourteen. Something like that.*

Lee: *And so when you think about that, when you came here, what ... did that ever come into your mind, I suppose, when you went up to 70 Mile Butte?*

Madeline: *Yes, because that country was again the same country that I'd seen over*

³² Ponteix is a town that is located north of Val Marie.

there. Yeah, I'm a prairie girl. I found that out that day. And it wasn't conscious. It just came to me when I saw the wide prairie stretch in front of me. Trees are nice, but in their place.

Lee: *So nowadays I suppose, are there any times when that comes to you? Nowadays, or not really?*

Madeline: *Yes, because I suppose ... Maybe if I hadn't had that experience, I would have moved to the city or some place. I don't think so, I don't know. But I've never considered it. I know I'm in place. In my place [laugh].*

The feeling evokes emotional connections that epitomise a sense of place and an “experiential place integration” or “blending of place and self within as overall sense of being in place” (Rowles and Ravdal 2002, 88).

Madeline shares this emotion with other elder residents like *Stephen* or *Zoé*, who also expressed a unity with the land. Feeling an affinity with the land, however this manifests, is accompanied by a considerable responsibility. Such a relationship with the land entails being aware of the impacts on the land and sustainability of the cultural landscape as a whole. The fate of the self is inherently bound to the fate of the land. Hence, where the identity of the self begins and that of the land ends is difficult to discern and for the most part, unnecessary to know.

5.4.3 – Synopsis

While the narratives of elder residents may be tied to particular places, the potency of the associated feelings leads people like *Mike*, *Zoé* and *Stephen* not to speak in singulars. Instead, they refer to the land as a whole. Therefore, being “inside” or “in the middle” of the land or nature – the “experiential place integration” – refers to the cultural landscape as a whole. Whether speaking of a close relationship with nature, a respect for “Mother Nature”, or a unity with the land or nature, the “self” of these individuals merges with the land to create the cultural landscape.

Given this merging, their perspective on such issues as the sustainability of the

community or the land is understandable. The meanings elder residents shared that symbolise an affinity with the land signify their worldviews and consequently, their ethics. Chapter Six addresses meanings that potentially infringe on this close relationship.

Near Hafford, the merging that elder residents like *Stephen* feel with the land influences his ethics and value judgements, leading to assessments of the wrongness of agricultural practices that injure the land and to a certain degree, the self. In and around Val Marie, elder residents such as *Zoé* and *Madeline* equate the GNP as representing meanings that will sustain the land and, by extension, the self. At the same time, elder residents such as *Martin* and *Laura* represent the feeling that the GNP endangers, and might bring a separation, from their close emotional connection and sense of being in place. Will they be and feel at home, if the land is owned by the GNP? As Chapter Six explores, changes in the cultural landscape lend to meanings indicative of separation from meanings such as that of home.

However, changes that include the formation of the RLBR and GNP are representative of meanings that signify both separation and continuity in these multifaceted cultural landscapes. Due to his emotional connection with the lake and ethic that has judged the rightness of the action, *Tom* helped to spearhead the establishment of the RLBR. Chapter Seven addresses how such intentional actions to sustain certain meanings are representative of a continuity. The ethics of elder residents play a central role in such decisions.

5.5 – Framing ethics

Our ethics provide the mental blueprints through which we mentally sift and sort in order to make sense and find meaning in our world. Worldviews represent the collection of beliefs by which we define our understanding of the world and its organisation – our source of identity (Roebuck 1999). The narratives of elder residents are indicative of their worldviews. Part of an ongoing process, their worldviews have been shaped by actions and attendant meanings during

childhood, growing up, and making a living. For instance, meanings linked to such things as connections with family or the community, progress and improvement, the relationship between work and life, or the affinity with the land add to the compilation of meaning. Together or alone, the sundry meanings have connected elder residents to their cultural landscape. The meanings collectively contribute to the worldviews of elder residents and correspondingly, their ethics and the ethical rules or inner guides that elder residents use to apply the assessment of good, bad, right, or wrong to actions in the cultural landscape.

Ethics are inherently tied to meaning and how we order our lives. Hence, they mirror how individuals feel they should live, extending “... beyond codified rules to touch our sources of meaning, clarifying our understanding of ourselves and our lives, both individually and in the many overlapping collectivities of which we are a part” (Roebuck 1999, 19). The meanings that infuse the ethics of elder residents help them to make sense of their cultural landscape.

For elder residents, some of the changes in the cultural landscape run counter to beliefs that formed while they were growing up and making a living and helped to shape their worldviews. The changes often reflect the tangle of social, economic, cultural, and political changes or structural constraints affecting the communities. As a reflection of their ethics, how elder residents make sense of their circumstances and the changes in their cultural landscape involve moral judgments that confront questions of good, bad, better, or worse (Smith 2000).

Building on the discussion in Chapter Six, Chapter Seven will explore how some elder residents feel that particular meanings they derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape are important to sustain.

CHAPTER SIX

SEPARATION AND MEANING

The question guiding the discussion in this chapter is, how do the elder residents derive meanings that reflect a separation from their cultural landscape? In response to this question, the discussion draws on the meanings expressed in previous chapters, meanings that arise from the ethics and related value judgements of elder residents. For instance, meaningful connections that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape include the importance of links with family and forebears, a their work-life, and reciprocal ownership with the land. With the ongoing changes in the town and countryside, such as those to agriculture, service provision, or the formation of the RLBR and GNP, Chapter Six examines narratives that reflect the discordance elder residents feel between the resulting alternative meanings and those which emanate from the above meaningful connections.

6.1 – Defining the community

6.1.1 – Changes in the community

The stones lying in gardens and around houses or the smell of hayfields noted in Chapter Four symbolise the secure mooring to the past that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape – their deep rootedness. From this mooring, elder residents referred to the tangible changes in their cultural landscape. Several assured me of the thriving towns they remembered. They contrasted this memory with the current loss and absence of the stores, now “green space,”

that had at one time lined the streets. Their words hearken to the local histories of both areas above, recalling the thrum of life that centred on these towns since their incorporation in the early twentieth century.

The perspectives of elder residents reflect a disjuncture between the past and present. The buildings and structures were symbols of growth and development when many of the elder women and men were growing up; they remember their parents helping to build these symbols. The absence and loss of signs of the achievements attained through resourcefulness and ingenuity from when they were growing up braid together with the meanings explored in Chapters Four and Five.

When *Rose* spoke of her and *Daniel's* lives, she mentioned how, even after they had moved into the town of Hafford, they had continued to visit their old farm. In many ways, *Rose* and *Daniel* were able to periodically revisit aspects of their former life, such as the quality of the water:

Rose: Really good water. But [Daniel] didn't like the Hafford water. Oh no, he didn't like Hafford water. For two years, we kept going to the farm for our water. Then my grandson got somebody, renters living there, so then we quit going.

Lee: Oh I see. So you couldn't go

Rose: Couldn't go after that. No, there was people living in the house so you couldn't go back. So that kind of ... And they didn't want the garden, so all the garden went up in weeds. ... So ...

Lee: [W]hat did you miss about ... even now what do you miss about that?

Rose: Well it's ruined. The farm is ruined. You know the buildings are all falling apart. It's ruined. And we took so good care of it. See that's ... that's why I don't like to go back because it hurts. We worked so hard for putting it the way it was.

For *Rose* and *Daniel*, the loss of the garden symbolised a separation from what they knew, a rift in the equation of action and meaning in their cultural landscape. Such actions were meaningful as they were “worthy of energy investment and commitment” (Korotkov 1998, 55). In Chapter

Four, *Rose* expressed how she and *Daniel* broke their own land, “one tree at a time,” and did not mind the hard work as “it was progress.” When they saw the farm “in ruins,” this contradicted the taken for granted understanding of what progress and improvement was to *Rose* and *Daniel*.

Robert Archibald (1999, 68) observes how a place can be a “crucible of memory.” He further explains that “... [t]he places where things happened are stimuli to memory and there in those places, memories will pour out with irresistible force.” Likewise, for men and women such as *Daniel* and *Rose*, the geographical location of the farm accords with their memory. However, the deluge of memories in these “crucibles” find discord with the now-empty farmyards that once housed the tangible results of the energy investment of forebears or, in the case of *Daniel* and *Rose*, their own efforts.

For elder residents who recount lively towns – shopping at old hardware stores or the general store – the meanings of this past mingle unavoidably and at times negatively, with the present reality of empty or boarded up stores. *Rose* explained how she continues to tend a garden in town. Perhaps this is part necessity and part symbol. Large gardens sit behind many houses in Hafford and as such, they may reflect a continuity that quietly bears witness and inadvertently, resists a changing way of life.

Near Val Marie, *Lilian* echoes these sentiments of regret when she speaks of the community where she had lived and the gradual decline and loss of physical reminders that once were a part of the cultural landscape. This vignette brings into sharp relief the reality of these losses for her:

Lilian: *But now that community is no longer. There is no longer a church. ... The sign has even gone off the highway where we raised our family as far as the church area. Where our postal address used to be, all that is left are the mailboxes on the street. ... It really hurt me so badly to go into that ghost town where my in-laws had moved into and where our children went to see the one set of the grandparents. ... But the elevator, even for all intents and purposes is closed; we don't sell our grain there anymore. It is just very painful for me to see a village die.*

Anchored by memory, the presence of houses, stores, or grain elevators in and around Val Marie may be gone. Ironically, these structures remain a part of the cultural landscape for elder residents by virtue of their *absence*. However, individuals such as *Lilian* have elected to avoid these “crucibles” of memory. These are places where meanings entwine with a flood of memories, triggered by an incongruous absence of a structure in the cultural landscape. *Lilian* explains how the inherent connections that link people to their cultural landscape are being undercut by changes that involve the loss of structures or even entire communities. For instance, I witnessed a hint of this loss as the last railway ties were removed in Val Marie during my stay.

Lilian's connections to her family and forebears are part of her religious beliefs, ones that recognise the innate connections between people and place: “A great love of God and respect of ... creates a respect within you or a love within you for not only the land, but for people – for the dignity of people and the goodness that there is in everyone.” As *Lilian* goes on to explain, the loss of tangible structures and objects – symbols of the lives innately bound to them – influence the connections to the past and the “natural flow of things”:

Lilian: If that chain somehow is broken and the natural flow of things doesn't happen as smoothly, let's put it that way, I mean things definitely have to change! Nothing can ever stand still. I'm not saying that we need to stay where we're at because that's not progression. But in some respects, we have progressed so far, we're regressing!! ... Another thing that really bothers me is the fact that our parents, our grandparents, built this great province. Truly built it. My stepfather was on the rural telephone lines that were built from there to there, from east to west. The railroad, he worked on the railroad; he saw so many new things. He did so many “firsts” in this great province... You see those things disintegrate and not necessarily for the better. You see things close up. You see rail lines lifted. ... Oh my! They worked so hard to put it there. Some of that rural decline is certainly causing more decline!

Consequently, *Lilian* reacts to meanings that conflict with her ethics, meanings that require the lifting of the railway ties or the abandonment of the “firsts” in Saskatchewan. As she says, her parents and many others helped to lay the railroads now being removed. To live ethically is to be

able to shift our perspective, acknowledging other points of view (Singer 1995). In this light, *Lilian* shifts her perspective and transcends time, incorporating her past into her present. *Lilian* therefore recognises the efforts and perspective of her forebears, and consequently, she finds meaning in their energy investment. The loss of the tangible rewards of their efforts – grain elevators and railway lines – leads her to conclude the wrongness of actions that are “causing more decline!”

According to the perspectives of elder residents in and around Val Marie and Hafford, the decline is apparent in the separation from elements of community they previously knew. Chapter Five explored how attributes such as familiarity, equality, and togetherness helped to shape the contours of community. For instance, *Natalie* and *Jean* in Hafford emphasised the egalitarian nature of the town. To recall, *Natalie* explained how “... everybody was the same. Everybody was equal. Nobody was better. Everybody did the same thing.” Her words indicate the value of a memory and the meaningfulness of feeling a part of families and the community as a whole, working and playing together. Her words also emphasise the loss of participating in a more egalitarian way of life.

Natalie's complaints dovetail with others whose memories of the meaning they derived from their cultural landscape are at odds with what they encounter in their community. *Walt* of Hafford commented how he remembered enjoying many of the events I mentioned in Chapter Five, including Sports Day and "Saturday Night." In Val Marie, similar events provided the tonic for the week such as the local theatre as an “evening out.” *Walt* braids these fond memories with evidence of alternative meanings that he now finds more prevalent in the town:

Walt: ... Actually, the people got a little too independent. They stick to themselves more now than they used to years back. Years back, they used to get ... even if the transportation wasn't as good, but people walked, people rode horseback, they road wagons and stuff like that. But they got together more than now. Nowadays ... now it seems like everything's for money.

To a certain extent, the changes within the community have related to factors such as transportation, itself linked to shifts in technology. At present, it “make sense” that we are able to travel distances that would not have been possible when the elder residents in these areas were growing up. Several mentioned how their grandchildren think little of travelling the hour to larger centres such as Saskatoon or Swift Current. Zygmunt Bauman (2001, 13) refers to how the “breach in the protective walls of a community became a foregone conclusion with the appearance of mechanical means of transportation....” The boundaries of community for some have extended with the aid of technology. However, the widened boundaries of the community are discordant with the memories of some elder residents, especially those who cannot take advantage of this technology, either through frailty or physical impairment. Given their ethics, supported by their worldviews, elder residents such as *Natalie*, *Jean*, or *Walt* simply see what is happening as wrong.

Along these lines, *Walt* comments how “everything’s for money,” indicating one of the complaints he and others have regarding how money often turns the wheels of their communities. Perhaps not everything is for money. Nonetheless, the comparison with what he remembers brings heightened relief to deficits he observes in his community. To a certain degree, this plays a role in the marginalisation Sherry Sian (2001) observed in her study of the Hafford region. Sian (2001) had noted how seniors or elder residents are isolated from family members as a symptom of out-migration. In addition to the separation from family members, it can also be a separation from sources of meaning elder residents feel are less evident in their communities. The lack of these sources of meaning results in a separation from their cultural landscape.

As Roy Baumeister (1991, 5) explained, “meaning connects things.” *Walt* and others link “too much independence” with a lack of togetherness and the pre-eminence of the dollar. His perspective chimes with what, in Chapter Two, John McMurtry (1998) considered as the money code of value. The meaning *Walt* finds in his cultural landscape reflects ethics and associated

value judgements informed by a worldview that, as previous chapters explored, began to take shape when he was growing up and making a living. With this incongruence of meaning in mind, *Jean* makes an explicit comparison with when she was growing up:

Jean: Well, there were more people. There was more action.

Lee: In what way?

Jean: Well, there was things going on. More things going on. We had concerts. We had plays. Everything's like that. But now it's just in school. You see older people don't have anything.

Lee: And it was different when you were growing up?

Jean: Yeah. We've somehow ... everybody was more involved in everything. Now I don't think ... people are not that involved. They all live in their own little shell [laugh].

That's what I think. I know we have the senior's club. There are a lot of people that belong to that, but, 'I'm not a senior ...' but he's 70 already. And tells me he's not a senior. I don't know why. So nobody wants to be involved to, when you're picked up to be a president or secretary, you're there 'til you die, because nobody wants to take over your job.

Lee: There's nobody else, yeah.

Jean: No. I don't know. We had different kinds of stores in Hafford. There were people coming with shows in here. Now we still have the hall, but it's not ... there's nothing going on there. But we had the grocery store, dry goods store. Well we still have a lumber yard. Machinery, different machinery. Massey Ferguson, McLeod or all these stores. We had all that. Nothing. No dry goods store anymore. If you need a pair of shoes or socks, you go to Battleford.

Lee: You have to go ... go away for it.

Brian: There were more people

In attempting to find meaning in her cultural landscape, *Jean* interweaves the lack of incentive to participate with other symbols of decline. For instance, she refers to the tangible reminders I noted in the previous section – the loss of stores that once lined the streets. Moreover, her husband *Brian* points to another symbol of change they have experienced. Like the boarded up stores and vacant lots, the absence of people contributes to the separation from meanings with which they had grown up and made a living, a feature of their worldviews. These meanings have

traditionally formed the ingredients from which individuals such as *Brian* or *Jean* used to find meaning in their cultural landscape.

In Val Marie, *Pierre* and *Adèle* explained how the younger generation as well as “newcomers” to the town are not interested in the contributions people such as *Pierre* have made to the development of the town. The tangible symbols of their efforts and energy investment in the town marks their contributions to their communities:

Adèle: The younger generation, the newcomers who come, they have no idea. And they're not interested. That's the sad part about ... Val Marie was a booming town and there was so many people, so many different nationalities and now as time goes by, it's getting smaller and smaller and no one seems to ...

Pierre: They don't seem to care for the place. "Oh, we're going to move to Swift Current. Oh we're going to go to Calgary. Oh, we're going to go here."

Similar to *Brian* in Hafford, *Adèle* brings together the diminishing population with the disinterest of members in the community. The meaning *Adèle* and *Pierre* derive from the cultural landscape by virtue of their effort in the development of the village is undermined by a sense that their contribution is not recognised.

In the current research, meaning reflects “*shared* mental representations” (my emphasis) of potential links between elements in a cultural landscape – “meaning connects things” (Baumeister 1991, 15). Therefore, the importance of shared meanings relies on recognising various contributions to the community. If this recognition is absent, it is “... tantamount to exclusion from [the] immediate or wider society” (Calnan *et al.* 2006, 357). The investment of energy and time that *Pierre* and *Adèle* have contributed to build the community is not shared or recognised by “newcomers” or youth, thus separating them from previous sources of meaning. Ultimately, the separation from the sources of meaning, such as the togetherness or interdependence they derive from their cultural landscape, are absent or diminished. The result is similar to what Sian (2001) found in the Hafford region. The absence of the sources of meaning

contributes to elder residents not feeling part of a community, one whose contours articulate in ways that increasingly prevent their inclusion.

Likewise, for some residents, the feeling of separation from the meanings they acquired when growing up or making a living in the areas in and around Hafford and Val Marie is also symbolised by those identified simply as “strangers” in the towns:

***Marthe:** In the summer you get quite a few tourists. Mind you, we don't see too many of them. They're out in the hills. You see a stranger in town and you say, oh well, that must be a tourist. That's it. We're so used to it and you see someone walking down for a walk at night. Oh, they're a tourist; they must be in the campground.*

Marthe's words reflect how the contours of community are extending beyond the “protective walls” of the previously known community (Bauman 2001, 13). In Hafford, *Rosalyn* echoed the sentiments of others, explaining how “... throughout most of the time, except for this three or four years, when we've suddenly had a lot of strangers moving into town, we knew everybody.” Eventually, a “stranger” may become known. But to the eyes of some who remember a community where they “knew everybody,” the presence of strangers may reflect a separation from sources of meanings such as a familiarity and trustworthiness they once felt characteristic for their communities. In Val Marie, *Marthe* explored the articulations of this perspective:

***Marthe:** Yeah because in a small town everyone knows everybody's kids and everybody. So if they're strangers, well they're tourists.*

***Lee:** Well that's something from my own perspective, I sometimes wonder if being a tourist whether those people can benefit, I guess, from knowing as closely this place as the folks who have lived here for a long period of time – having an idea of those experiences ...?*

***Marthe:** I don't know. We don't usually talk to any of the tourists at all. They stay down into the campground and they go visit and first thing you know, they're gone. If you happen to go by, you'll notice there's a bunch of them in the campground and that's it.*

***Lee:** So there's no real, there's no real ...*

***Marthe:** No, not much connection. Well maybe with park ... with those that work for*

Parks Canada, of course. They have guides and stuff that take ... there'd be connection there and at the little museum probably, a connection with them because they usually visit that little museum.

For individuals such as *Marthe*, the presence of “strangers” in and around Val Marie contributes to her separation from attributes of her community. Now, not all the people in the community are familiar – not everyone is known.

While the shifting contours of community may render complaints of a lack of familiarity or togetherness, according to some elder residents, their loss of independence is also an unwelcome casualty of social and economic changes:

Daniel: *In those days, we used to go thirty miles for wood, dry wood. Three days for a load of wood. We had no money to buy coal.*

Rose: *And today ...*

Daniel: *Well there's no coal. It's gas.*

Rose: *It's gas*

Daniel: *But it's so expensive.*

Rose: *Gas or propane. A lot of people have propane. But, I don't know.*

Daniel: *You know, suppose the power would go off here and it was thirty below. What would you do? You'd freeze, hey. ...*

Rose: *And we've got no conveniences at all if something ... if the power goes off, what are we going to do?*

Daniel: *You can't get nothing, you can't get water, ah! No heat. You can't eat.*

Rose: *See and you're sitting and you worry about this. When you're older, you know, you think, suppose the power would go off what would we do?*

For *Daniel* and *Rose*, such concerns counter the expressions of joy that accompany memories of the freedom they experienced while they lived on their farm. *Diane* succinctly stated how old age, the so-called “golden years,” are “for the birds.” Undoubtedly, individuals such as *Diane* miss a measure of the self-sufficiency with which she and others have become accustomed.

However, like *Rose* and *Daniel*, due to social and economic changes or structural constraints, the lack of self-sufficiency, an ingrained part of their worldview, translates into real concern.

Here are the realities of which Joseph and Martin-Matthews (1993) and others speak, in terms of the changes and challenges facing elder residents in rural communities. The meanings that elder residents shared in Chapter Five encounter alternative meanings that stem from social and economic changes. The social and economic changes have caused the help of family and fellow community members to be exchanged with government programmes. Rather than only family or community members, face-less bodies now control health and decisions related to such things as agriculture, the focus of the next section. This conflicts with what elder residents learned and lived when they were younger.

In her study of rural communities in Upstate New York, Janet Fitchen (1991, 161) discussed how there is an “... almost legendary rural commitment to ‘independence’ rather than ‘dependence’ on government programs.” Elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie have accepted that medical or other services require travel to larger urban centres – Swift Current for those in and around Val Marie and Saskatoon or North Battleford for residents in or near Hafford. Nonetheless, for *Daniel* and *Rose*, the dearth of services in their communities is part of the meanings they now find in their cultural landscape. Many of the elder men and women remember the need and ability to fend for themselves. The loss of independence translates into a change in the meaning they once derived from their cultural landscape.

Individuals such as *Audrey* in Hafford press the point. The community has surmounted these challenges in the past, so why not now? Her commitment to the town, as well as values acquired from her parents, lead her to question the “progress” that has come to define her cultural landscape:

***Audrey:** ... And the ladies of the community, they would go to the hospital and I think they met once a week. And they made the gowns for the patients. They made them on*

sewing machines and when there was a tear or something getting worn, they mended and that was what they called the hospital aid. And that's how they looked after the hospital. That's why it bothers me so much now that on our own, we could do this. We were without a hospital ... we had a hospital and a doctor from 1922 on until just a few years ago. Now we don't have a resident doctor. And you can't tell me that's progress. ... It's not my definition of progress.

Therefore, the absence of services includes a loss of the independence of a community being able to address fundamental concerns such as health. Hafford in particular is not lacking in independence and the people are characterised by their interdependence. The characteristic of interdependence accords with the findings of Sharmalene Mendis (2004, 94), who noted how people in Hafford possessed a strong ability to pull together. Still, elder residents such as *Audrey* in Hafford do not recognise the will to counteract structural constraints impinging on important services such as health. In particular, *Audrey* gives her judgment. She states how a development that contravenes a characteristic such as independence and ingenuity, one embedded in her worldview, is wrong and definitely not “progress.”

Moreover, although the community is able to work well together, elder residents such as *Audrey* do not feel included. Similarly, *Pierre* and *Adèle*, or *Marthe* in Val Marie, express how their worldviews consider the situation in their community to be wanting. Again, this hearkens to the findings of Sherry Sian (2001) regarding the marginalisation of elder residents.

6.1.2 – Synopsis

Although the sources of meaning evoked by remnants of buildings or the smell of hayfields provide anchors for meaning, the attributes of communities change. The sources of meanings individuals confided in Chapters Four and Five interlace with those related to changes in their cultural landscape, such as the decline of services, the loss of communities, or more

recently, the introduction of the RLBR and the GNP. As such, the facets of meaning are woven into the larger web of meaning infusing the cultural landscape.

As Chapters Four and Five described, some of the meanings individuals derived from their cultural landscape included attributes such as togetherness or equality. However, *Adèle* and *Pierre* expressed the lack of recognition for their energy investment and contributions to the town or countryside. The lack of recognition also erects barriers to communities whose contours are shifting. The contours of community are anything but static. Some elder residents may hearken to previous communities where they felt included because they have had fewer opportunities to contribute to the contours of their current ones.

The loss of tangible reminders of their forebears' contribution to the province brings together conflicting meanings – those that elder residents developed when they were growing up and meanings now shaping their current cultural landscapes. Chapter Seven explores the efforts of some elder residents to continue meanings in relation to their cultural landscape, meanings they have derived and valued during their lives.

6.2 – Changes in agriculture

6.2.1 – Changing tools of the trade

As Chapters Four and Five indicate, the worldviews of elder residents in this research are closely tied to agriculture. Particular landmarks such as railways or grain elevators that have traditionally related to agriculture in Saskatchewan fit into an equation between effort and reward that make emotional sense (Korotkov 1998). The meanings related to these landmarks align with what *Lilian* described above regarding the “firsts” her forebears helped to build and their subsequent contribution to the province. More specifically, *Mike* in Hafford explains his disappointment with farming, conveying the disjunction and what the loss of these landmarks symbolise – empty reward:

Mike: I'm sort of disappointed. I'm disappointed like for instance, with the Pool. When we first started, it was such a get-up-and-go. Everybody was so excited about the co-ops and the Pool. We went to great lengths to get where we were and then to get a bunch of smart guys to come and tell us how to run this into the ground. I mean, the cheap CEO is getting three hundred thousand dollars a year. For what? ... And then you wonder, how do you sustain a thing like that. What's he? Who's he? Where did he come from? At the same time, you were there standing by, and seeing it happen. Our Pool representative would come after the annual meeting and he says, 'Yeah, cutting down from twelve hundred to six hundred elevators in Saskatchewan.' ... So, eventually they tell us, the railways can't sustain this and that. They bring us the heavy rail and then twenty years down the road, they pull the train out. I was still farming there when I saw them replacing the rails to the heavy rail here. And you thought, 'Oh God, at least not forever, but at least another twenty-five years.' It didn't last that long.

For *Mike*, it is difficult to weave changes that are tangibly seen (or no longer seen, in the case of railways and grain elevators related to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool³³), into the meanings he and other elder residents have traditionally drawn from their cultural landscape. The loss of tangible cues that engage the meanings separate individuals such as *Mike* from a facet of their cultural landscape.

As the narratives of the elder women and men in Chapter Four depict, the meanings they derived from their cultural landscape when they were younger – such as ingenuity and resourcefulness – largely worked in concert with the intentions of the government. But individuals such as *Mike* express frustration with current restrictions, commenting how people years ago could plant trees they had found when travelling outside of the town: “Today, the government and all the different areas, you cannot move stuff, you cannot dig stuff, you cannot,

³³ The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was incorporated in 1923 in an effort for farmers to collectively obtain a better price for their grain. The Alberta Wheat Pool was also created in 1923 and the Manitoba Wheat Pool formed a year later. These three pools formed the Canadian Co-operative Wheat Producers Ltd. in 1924 (Painter 2004).

you cannot, you cannot.” The loss of freedom and imposition is clearly evident in his words – the controls imposed by the government restrict behaviour that, when he was younger, was a taken-for-granted freedom.

For others, the infringement on their autonomy is more explicit, with some expressing frustration with taxation and costs of pursuing a life in agriculture. Again, these controls are symbolic of alternative meanings that exist in the cultural landscape due to the regulations of the government. For *Martin* and *Laura*, who ranch south of Val Marie, the levels of taxation are compounded by other actions. In terms of the annual flood in that part of the province, they comment:

Martin: *[The flood is] what we want. We want it. But then the government is not ... [r]unning the water so we don't get the flood. They claim they're not, but we know they are.*

Laura: *But now this year, after this meeting that we had here with them the other day, they're going to try and open the gates up when Snake Creek comes through to make sure that everybody gets a flood.*

Martin: *Snake Creek's way up on the divide*

Laura: *But we'll believe that ... But it was a way of getting us out of here because you cut off your water, you can't grow feed and it's just been one thing after another that we've been fighting the government over.*

Lee: *And how would you say it's different from ... thinking about when you first started down here?*

Laura: *Well taxes have gone up high, high, high. They're just ...*

Martin: *Well for example, when I bought the ranch, I think I paid ... I think it was \$1500, leased rentals. Now it's about \$27,000.*

Lee: *Huh!*

Laura: *Yes. It takes a hundred head of calves, a hundred calves in order for us to pay for our lease taxes.*

Martin: *That's how much the taxes went up. That's what I say; this kind of government will break the country because the economy can't take it.*

Unfortunately, the criticisms of *Martin* and *Laura* and the experiences they recount join a

growing chorus of frustration. The complaints are a part of the widespread malaise that afflicts the vocations of ranching and farming (Boyens 2001; Epp and Whitson 2001). Feelings of frustration with meanings that represent control over the land confine individuals. Consequently, the alternative meanings contribute negatively to the webs of meaning infusing the relationship of elder residents and the cultural landscape. In part, these sentiments are linked to widespread changes.

While agriculture for many years could avoid the mantra of wage-labour, the forces of economic change have been difficult to ignore and elude (Stirling 2001; Page 2003). Brian Page (2003, 246) explains how what has occurred in agriculture is closer to attrition or “appropriationism”:

Appropriationism has occurred as capitalist firms, unable to effect the industrial transformation of agricultural production in its entirety, have instead assimilated discrete aspects of the farm labor process into factory based industry where they have been rationalized, mechanized, and intensified beyond anything possible on the farm.

These meanings reflect an ideology that guides agriculture, effectively threatening to estrange individuals from the meanings they derive from their relationship with their cultural landscape. For instance, the source of meaning *Mike* derived from his work on his farm involved a relationship with the land characterised by an affinity with land as well as a reciprocal ownership. He later explored the uneasy influence of alternative meanings born of changes representative of “appropriationism”:

Mike: ... Okay, at that time, we used a different ... values were different. You know, because labour was cheap. Now with the labour, cost of labour high and the cost of machines high and everything went out of whack. And I think it's getting to the point where survival of the fittest probably will work itself in some place along the way.

Lee: ... the really large farms will be able to [survive]...?

Mike: Well, they'll survive a little bit longer because they can cut corners a little bit more. You know they talk about, 'Oh we'll sell our grain and make a little better

money.’ It doesn’t solve all the problems. It only solves the problems for the guy that’s close to the railway, he can sell it and is the one that gains the most. And the one that’s furthest away, forget about it. You know, that this thing that they’re fighting, ‘I’ll sell my own grain,’ that just does not fly. They have to have a central place where they’ll ... they’ll look out for the poor as well as for the rich. Then it’ll be more even, it’ll be a more even playing field. Otherwise, it doesn’t make sense. I mean, what are we for ... on this earth for? Just to see how much money we can make – more than the neighbour? Or how much the bank balance is ...? I don’t get that satisfaction. I get more satisfaction if I can help a neighbour in his dire straits. That makes me feel good. And I think that’s the bottom line.

This particular vignette rings with a resolute affirmation of values that are dichotomous to those *Mike* finds increasingly prevalent in the cultural landscape. Secured by ethics that judges these values to be wrong, *Mike* expresses his disagreement to alternative meanings being imposed upon and woven into his cultural landscape.

Elder residents such as *Ed* or *James* near Hafford echo these alternative meanings when they mention the price of grain. They speak of how taxation and other costs have increased while the monetary reward for their efforts remains little changed. For individuals such as *James*, these changes prevent him from farming, as the expenses are too great. He explained how the pursuit of bigger and better farm equipment at the behest and with the help of banks has affected the pride in ownership demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Elder women and men shared the value and meaning of ownership, one that imbued their relationships with the cultural landscape. In contrast to, and in the context of changes that have come to affect agriculture, *Ed* is starkly critical of such presumed ownership:

Ed: ... *Because the minute you push the small guys out, the big guys are so big in hock. You’re mine. And the little guy, well he’s fighting back because he doesn’t own nothing. And he can stand up on his legs and say, ‘well, that’s mine.’ But no, that’s not what’s going to happen. They want the big farmer, because they got full control of them.*

Lee: ... *when you think about how it was when you grew up. Even just thinking about the things that you did, walking through your fields or whatnot years ago. What has*

happened to that?

Ed: *Well, you still can walk through your fields, but you don't feel like walking through it because you know damn well that there's just enough pay for your taxes and for your fuel bills. You worked all your life on it. But this is better yet. You see, they gave it to my grandfather and my father, this land. They opened it up with a pick axe 'cause my father and my grandfather came to Canada 1907, 1908. My grandfather had a homestead, he opened up the land and as a matter of fact, he farmed himself for about ten years or so before my dad took over. Well my dad bought his own land, but I mean, that's another story. But the thing is, those times are different to what they're now.*

In Chapter Four, *Mike* acknowledged the limited quality of some lands. Nonetheless, it was something he owned. He spoke of how, when he was younger, "... from time to time, you went and sort of explored it. The inside of it." The vignette *Ed* shared, and the sentiments of alienation it encapsulates, is similar to that of others in these areas. Their frustrations rebound from and question the value and meaning of that hard-won ten dollars many of their parents paid to purchase those first 160 acres. The above vignettes are indicative of a separation from a relationship with the cultural landscape that has become synonymous with homesteading, settlement, and ownership. In cases such as these, the disparate meanings emplaced within the cultural landscape separate individuals from these deeply felt meanings.

Hence, many of these elder men and women were born into a world in which 160 acres was the norm and enough to satisfy the needs of their families. But according to some, the land has changed. Or more accurately, as *Walt* of Hafford confided, people have changed the land: "Years back, we worked on the land with horses. There was just so much you could do because of the time limit to put your crops in and stuff like that." Individuals were satisfied with what the technology at the time could allow. With his words, *Walt* acknowledges the responsibility of people for a sometimes strained relationship with the land.

Pierre in Val Marie shared a similar source of meaning that hearkens to those he and others learned when they were younger. In this vignette, he demonstrates how these meanings

interweave with alternative ones present in the cultural landscape:

***Pierre:** They say, ‘Oh gee, my tractor’s getting worn out.’ Even my brother in-law here. He’s had four tractors and I’m still on the first one. He said, ‘Geez, my tractor’s getting worn out there, better go look for another one.’ I look at him and put my hand on his shoulder, turn him around and I face him. I said, ‘Is it the tractor that’s getting old or is it the guy that’s tired of sitting on the same seat?’ I said, ‘Which one is it?’ ‘Oh,’ he says, ‘it won’t last very long.’ I said, ‘Mine is 26 years old and I’m still sitting on the same seat.’ Oh that’s why it cost so much. People say there’s no money in farming. We’ve only got three quarters and we’ve got a full line of machinery and six, seven years ago, we built a big quanset at the farm. That’s all ... everything is paid. ...*

These reflections pivot on changes to the “tools of the trade.” The horse gave way to the tractor. The drive of technology has since yielded larger and more efficient inventions that now ply the fields. When I asked *Pierre* how he explained the push to purchase the large combines and tractors, the new tools of the trade, his response was simple – greed. It is not as simple as he suggested perhaps. A discussion with many ranchers or farmers would no doubt reveal many extenuating circumstances. For instance, some may be locked into a relationship with their cultural landscape whose meaning now hinges on an ever-larger input of money. Nonetheless, *Pierre* explained:

***Pierre:** ... Some people are never satisfied with what they’ve got. They’ve always got to try and get more and more. There are some guys here that farm quite a bit of land and I was told not too long ago that just to do the seeding, the spraying and the fuel and stuff like that, that farmer spends \$250,000 and that’s with the fertiliser besides that. And sure they say we thresh more than you. I said, ‘Yeah, that is good. I agree with you.’ I said, ‘My granary is only half and yours is full.’ But I say, ‘My half is mine and yours, the full is not yours.’ ‘Well how can you figure that out?’ Because, I say, ‘You put it all into the expense.’*

For *Pierre*, as well as for two others in Hafford, the cautionary words that “the grass isn’t always greener on the other side” belies their ethics. Recalling Chapter Four, the lives of individuals such as *Pierre* required their efforts meet their needs in addition to those of their family and

communities. People such as *Pierre* recognise their inherent connections beyond themselves:

Pierre: So you see this is why we live here. People say, 'Geez, you're stupid! You're just ready to die and you're putting a lot of money into your house. You'll never get the dollar that you put in.' I said, 'I don't expect to.' I say, 'When I kick the bucket, there'll be somebody else taking it.'

His tie to his cultural landscape and the contributions he has made to the town are not broken with his death. For as *Pierre* maintains, “there'll be someone else taking it,” and hence, recalling the ideas Korotkov (1998), *Pierre's* efforts will have been meaningful and worth the investment of energy. As such, he also demonstrates an element of his ethics that incorporates the idea of living ethically and thinking beyond his own interests (Singer 1995). In terms of a loss or a separation, elder residents signal how aspects of life and agriculture differ from what they once took for granted. Nonetheless, *Pierre* holds on to what he believes despite the ideology that likens success in agriculture with large farms and newer and bigger equipment. While the separation or loss of characteristic attributes of agriculture may not represent an immense rift for people such as *Pierre*, for others, it is acute.

Aided by the boons of technology, including inorganic chemicals and fertilisers, agricultural practices have become less restricted by things such as the capricious nature of the climate or the time needed to allow soils to rejuvenate. For individuals such as *Lilian*, the meanings she derives from the efforts of her forebears are difficult to interweave with those reliant upon vast sums of money. *Lilian* regards the latter relationship with the land as a betrayal of the “natural law” of stewardship practised by her forebears. The impact of interactions reflective of this betrayal clearly touches a chord that derives its potency from a worldview shaped by memories of when *Lilian* was younger.

The meanings she derives from her cultural landscape that imbue her worldview and ethics. In her words, her ethics accords with the “natural law” to which the relationship with the

land must adhere. Call it stewardship or call it a “natural law.” In any case, such a meaningful relationship is intensified by memories of a preferred relationship to the land. This preferred relationship braids uneasily with those some elder residents feel currently predominates, one that is governed by an ideology that promotes the need for bigger equipment and more land.

6.2.2 – Questioning the bottom line

Such an ideology is discordant with many of the meanings elder residents have customarily derived from their cultural landscape. In a letter sent to me in February of 2005, *Stephen* explained his reaction to the uneasy interweaving of personal meanings with those related to farming practices reliant on high chemical and fertiliser inputs. His relationship with the land pivots on his connection with, and reverence for, “Nature”:

Stephen: ... Harvest, of the hay, then the grains, was to us a wonderful period, despite the dust and sweat. Lose that respect for that season and you’ve today’s corporate farming, the dessicated crops, the huge machines mining the land. ... Greed and gluttony have replaced respect for natural processes is the dust. ... Such mechanized selfishness has turned (the big) farmers against their neighbours, coveting each other’s land, trampling roughshod over everything [t]hat may be left of wild Nature. And with the government supporting this treacherous economy and also those corporations who promote such a predatory way of farming, communities become inhuman.

These are strong words of condemnation and ample evidence of the difficulty *Stephen* has in reconciling the meanings he finds in his cultural landscape with those of others. His words reverberate with an ethic that finds credence in his connection with Nature, the value beyond himself. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, it reflects the “self-world” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 140) link that epitomises the relationship of individuals such as *Stephen* or *Zoé* with the cultural landscape: their unity with the land. *Stephen* interprets meanings reflective of, in his words, “corporate farming, the dessicated crops, the huge machines mining

the land,” as dichotomous to the meanings he and others seek to cultivate. Such a reaction suggests the difficulties people such as *Stephen* experience when the meanings they derive from their cultural landscape intertwine with alternative and disparate ones.

His words are a reaction against sources of meaning that seek to dominate the web of meanings he has customarily derived from the cultural landscape. As *Mike* succinctly stated above, there are criteria other than the dollar, by which to establish the “bottom line.” Similar to *Stephen*, *Ed* dismisses farming as mining, explaining how farming has become “big business.” With this said, elder residents such as *Ed* and *Stephen* resist a value system dominated by money. Recalling the stance of John McMurtry (1998) in a previous chapter, money is the beginning and end to the value sequence: “More money, not more life, is the regulating objective of thought and action ... Money is not used for life. Life is used for money. The final measure of Good is the increase or decrease of money sums” (McMurtry 1998, 299).

According to the ideas of individuals such as *Lilian* in Val Marie and *Stephen* in Hafford,³⁴ the land is increasingly wearing the negative results of agricultural practices. The land accepts the trade-offs of this relationship and returns in kind. *Robert* of Hafford put into words the results of this reciprocity: “[T]he land is only as good as you are to the land. What you do to the land shall be reaped back to you. Remember those words. The land is as good to you as you will be good to the land.”

The previous chapter noted how the relationship of some elder residents with their cultural landscape was strengthened by the responsibility to “feed the countries.” This responsibility featured in a vignette that *Robert* shared. He felt that it is the prairie and not

34 Ten of the people with whom I spoke in Hafford explicitly mentioned the role of chemicals in farming. Whereas, in Val Marie, two individuals made a comment about the role of chemicals. However, it is possible that the nature of agriculture in Val Marie (a significant number of ranches) requires the use of fewer chemicals.

mountains or trees that assists individuals in shouldering this responsibility. Others may disagree, but the sentiment brims with the tenets of an ethic that locates meaning by acknowledging the contribution one makes beyond oneself to “feed the countries.” According to some elder residents, these meanings are threatened by the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers, another widely felt change.

As Ingeborg Boyens (2001) explains, currently, North American farmers are highly dependent on chemicals in the form of fertilisers and pesticides. But this reality must be somehow reconciled with what Brian Donahue (2003, 36) describes as a fundamental agrarian value:

[T]he provision of good food. Our farms should be growing, and people should be eating, the most delicious, unadulterated food. It should be, and can be, not only abundant and reasonably priced, but free of pathogens and poisons.

When some elder residents commented about the changing tools of the trade in farming, their choice of words was telling. I asked *Rose* and *Daniel* to tell me about their perspectives on the changes that have occurred in the land:

Rose: Oh it's such a big ... well, it's for the best. It's for the best. Now, but in the days, in those days, we never used fertiliser. Never used chemicals. Nothing at all. It was just plain grain or plain seed and now, everything is polluted. You know, everything is, I don't say polluted, but it's ... it's not pure.

Her words reflect the difficulty of weaving together dichotomous meanings. For individuals such as *Rose*, progress and improvement were the watchwords of farming and the reward was the “provision of good food” for family, and both the immediate and imagined community. The “poisoning” of the land in an effort to “improve” farming counter meaningful and longstanding connections with the cultural landscape. The role of the farmer or rancher was not to poison the land but to help build the country.

The changes in agriculture were at odds with personal meanings derived from the cultural landscape, as well as those imparted by the government with their nation-building policies. *Ed* echoed the frustration and is forthright and cutting with his assessment:

Ed: ... [E]ven the game warden was saying, 'I wouldn't actually advise you to eat some of those birds that feed on those fields that were desiccated.' So okay, if it's no good, maybe we shouldn't eat it ... that grain that they're doing, where is it going? Is that good for the people? Or, that straw that's been used, is that good for the people? I mean, you'll feed that straw to the animals and then you turn around and eat those animals. So where is that poison going? And all of a sudden, with all these new chemicals and all of a sudden, you've got new diseases. Didn't you ever start to think maybe those diseases have got something to do with the way the farming [is practiced]? And okay, you can't burn lead in the cars and stuff like that. Can't use lead in this, can't do that. But the chemicals, see, that's okay.

Ed points to an hypocrisy that, in his eyes and those of certain others with whom I spoke, underlies an agricultural system that has traditionally played an immense role in the meanings people derive from their cultural landscape. Certainly *Ed* and *Rose* are finding meaning, and as Roy Baumeister (1991, 15) explained, “meaning connects things.” But the braid of meanings certain connections involve do not complement one another. For instance, the responsibility to provide “good food” does not complement the belief that pesticides or “poison” resides on the materials destined for countless dinner tables as so-called “good food.” *Ed*’s words point to his ethics, a responsibility beyond himself.

The alternative meanings laid out in the cultural landscape, accompanied by more “efficient” equipment and regimens, contribute to other unwelcome changes. Several of the elder men and women expressed a relationship with their cultural landscape that is characterised by memories of a blurred division between work and life. Near Hafford, *Stephen* spoke of his job-life. His words mirrored those of *Zoé* near Val Marie, who explained how for her and her siblings, “chores were our pleasures.” However, with the changes in agriculture, the two halves

of the “job-life” have diverged. Along with this change is the well-known coalescence of the numerous family farms into the larger farms. Most of the elder residents noted this change in their cultural landscape. These point to the loss of sources of meaning that elder residents highlighted and derived from their cultural landscape. As Chapter Four explored, the losses include recreational events such as "Saturday Night," the work-life of families, and a loss of the continued presence of families on their farms or ranches.

In the previous chapter, *Mike* described a life that flowed inevitably from farming with his parents to establishing his own farm. Nowadays, tinged with frustration and cynicism, one individual offered the sentiment of how leaving the farm to one's children is considered a form of child abuse. From this perspective, the challenges of farming in the present circumstances of high capital investment and debt renders the action of passing the farm to one's children as essentially cruel. The continuity of farming is impossible.

In this light, *Mariya* and *Mark* braid together sources of meanings reflective of the loss or disruption of this continuity with others noted above, such as the loss of services and the changing tools of the trade of farming. As *Mike* exemplifies, the transition and continuity between farming or ranching with their parents to their own farm or ranch may be well worn by custom. However, like individuals such as *Ed*, who expressed a frustration with the food they produce being compromised by the use of chemicals, *Mariya* also recognises the potentially deleterious influence of changing farming practice:

Lee: ... You speak about your experiences when you were growing up and the things that you did and whatnot, how did those changes, do those changes have any impact on how you see ... how you see the land?

Mariya: When we farmed, we farmed part and we summerfallowed. Now they do continuous cropping. That is different. There was a lot of bushes at one time, well, the big machines. They can't turn around and so you go and you clear these things. There's no bushes anymore. I suppose they want more so they clear every block that there is. And that's different because in our time, my dad, his dad, ourselves, we half

summerfallow so okay then ... at one time, they said, oh produce more, you'll get more. Well then one year they produced more, then they told next year, summerfallow everything because you produced too much. There's no happy medium in between. And I don't know, maybe even that changed our climate. Removing all the bushes. Maybe that's why we don't get the rains we used to, I don't know.

Mariya's words point to a complex web of meaning that incorporates the frustrations with the control of their relationship with the land. *Mariya* does not say who “they” are, but presumably “they” are the companies and governmental bodies who advocated the use of chemicals and continuous cropping, ones whom several elder residents labelled simply as the Economist, Banker, or the Government. It is perhaps the simmering regret of a misplaced trust in the bodies who hailed the National Policy of the Dominion of Canada when the West was first being “settled” and individuals were asked to help build the country and “feed the world.”

Mariya's comments also bring potential impacts on the natural environment into the fold. In a similar vein, other elder residents draw connections between the impact on the natural world and changing tools of the trade in agriculture and its chemicals. They also comment on the consequence of wider and more efficient roads. *Natalie* asked, “Where are the birds?” reminiscent of the “Silent Spring” that urged Rachel Carson to write her groundbreaking work of the same name (Carson 1962). Speaking of the current generation, *Natalie* explains:

Natalie: *I don't know if they have challenges [laugh]. I suppose they do. They want more. Everybody wants more. So they try to get more out of the land. They use more chemicals to start with. To be able to grow things. They're trying to kill all the weeds, but they kill everything too. Kill the birds and they kill everything. It comes along. The water is not as good as it used to be. We didn't have to worry about water. We always had good water.*

Lee: *When you think about how it was when you were growing up? Does it have any effect on how you see, how you see this area?*

Natalie: *Well, it's just like everywhere else. I mean, there is something happening if you don't see birds around. Where are the birds? And, I don't know.*

Her perspective binds together meanings that hearken to the previous critique of *Pierre* in Val Marie. He spoke of the perennial dissatisfaction of people urging him to seek more land, use more chemicals, purchase newer equipment, and so on. Riveted to her ethics, perhaps, *Natalie* unquestionably draws a direct link between the use of chemicals and the compromising effect on nature in the form of wildflowers and birds as well as fundamental aspects of life such as water. The concerns of *Natalie* and the resulting impact on the meanings she derives from her cultural landscape are shared by individuals such as *Zoé* and *Peter* near Val Marie.

Chapter Four described sources of meaning that some individuals, such as *Zoé*, found inscribed into parts of the prairie undisturbed by the plough. Similarly for *Peter* who also lives near Val Marie, the boundary between Nature or the “Earth” is indistinct and undefined. Hence, he understandingly confides how he perceives alternative meanings, such as those associated with farming, that impact his cultural landscape:

Peter: Okay, at one time here, about twenty-five years ago, they were going to plough ... south of us, it's all P.F. [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] and there's a two or three section field south and west and east. Like ours is north and west and east. And they were going to plough this whole thing. That was devastating. We just ... mind you, the whole community rose up and they wouldn't let it happen. But if that should happen, I was saying, that's kind of the end of life. Might as well close it down. But what they were going to do is plant it to tame grass. So, it wouldn't be black, but it's ... man can't make it the way God did. So, it would have been better than ploughed land but it still would have lost all it's glamour. Because once the land is turned over, the way it was made either six thousand years ago or maybe six million, I don't know, it's never the same again. But that was averted, thank God, and life went on...

Lee: Well it's just, as we were saying before I guess, for some people that's ...

Peter: Some people, that's just ... it feeds their soul. And I can appreciate that. Anything that feeds your soul, you can ... another person can get a little value from it. But for me, it would be total death.

Similar to others like *Zoé* and *Madeline*, *Peter* feels how prairie that is unbroken and not despoiled (in their eyes) by people and their tools is an unmitigated source of meaning. This

source of meaning is irrevocably part of his ethics. As Jonathan Smith (2004) explains, it is an ethic that is “categorical” or unconditional and absolute in nature; whereby, a transgression for *Peter* is “total death.”

Much like *Peter*, the elder residents with whom I spoke offered little support for the changes in agriculture. A word must be said here as to why this may be the case. There were no elder residents who explicitly favoured capital-intensive agricultural practices. And of all the elder residents who participated in this research, only one individual provided a view that was not vehemently against changes in agriculture that entailed an increased use of chemicals. *Dave* explained how the “old-timers” did not use any chemicals and went on to explain how “That has changed through the years, but I don’t know if it’s hard on anything or not. It doesn’t seem to be. It seems to grow. I’d say, everything’s kind of ongoing.”

With this said, *Dave* does not speak out in favour of the increased use of chemicals as much as he is not against their use. Changes in agriculture have not had a great impact on the value he has derived from his relationship with the cultural landscape. In contrast, elder residents such as *Ed*, *Stephen*, *Peter* or *Zoé* share narratives that offer explicit condemnation for the use of chemicals and larger and more expensive equipment. Their narratives point to how the overall lack of support for the recent changes in agriculture may hinge on a sense of alienation that these individuals feel. For the land is no longer the “same land as their ancestors” (Setten 2004, 409).

Despite this sense of alienation, elder residents such as *Peter* symbolise a perspective that recognises alternative ones. The vignette that *Peter* shared above brings to light a degree of empathy embedded in his ethic. *Peter* may equate “total death” with the meanings others, such as farmers, derive from the cultural landscape. Nonetheless, he appreciates the commonality, not in the *source* of meaning, but in its effect: “... Anything that feeds your soul,” he says, “...another person can get a little value from it.” This provides a hint of the ideas Chapter Seven will explore – an holistic cultural landscape in which different and, at time incongruent, meanings co-exist.

Hence, from the perspective of an ethical landscape, the cultural landscape is shaped by the recognition of interests and meanings beyond one's own.

6.2.3 – Synopsis

In Chapter Two, I mentioned a study by Gunhild Setten that focussed on farming in the Jæren district in Norway. Setten (2004, 410 – emphasis original) comments:

Inheriting both the land and mentality, as most of these farmers do, means that the past is in principle very much like the present. There is therefore no profound meaning to preserving the past as material objects such as houses or dry-stone walls. The farmers are instead creating a narrative continuity by *acting out* the past in the present.

But this is part of the problem for some of the residents in and around Val Marie and Hafford, for they have also inherited the mentality. However, the land and alternative relationships with that land, do *not* conform to the past and hence, a disjuncture between present and past develops. As *Mike* describes, the interaction of meanings yields a feeling of empty reward for previous energy investment.

Some elder residents feel the government who at one time favoured the sources of meaning they derived from their cultural landscape – independence, work-life, and so on – now imparts meanings with which those of elder residents conflict. For instance, high taxes act to separate and prevent these individuals from lives they have led for decades. Elder residents also resist the singular source of meaning of “bigger is better,” as it impinges on other sources of meaning that contribute to their cultural landscape. In the eyes of some elder residents, chemical companies, banks, and the government enhance changes that encourage some to purchase and need more land, equipment, and the new tools of the trade – chemical fertiliser and pesticide – to grow bigger and better.

The values and responsibility that afforded meaning in their memories of when they were

younger are compromised as the food is “not pure.” This signals an inherent hypocrisy people such as *Ed* find galling. According to some elder residents, the ethics that guide the agricultural system is defined by a value system in which the dollar rules.

Although agriculture continues to play a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape in and around Hafford and Val Marie, the RLBR and GNP have become equally defining. However, some elder residents feel that the meanings the RLBR and GNP impart onto the cultural landscape may also act to separate elder residents from meanings characteristic of their cultural landscape.

6.3 – Changing cultural landscape: The RLBR and GNP

In light of the changes in the cultural landscape in and near Val Marie, *Martin* and *Laura* shared their perspectives. They explained the importance of the geographical area in which they live. Their words bring sharp relief to the potential of a *discontinuity* of meaning:

Lee: Yeah, it seems like [the Frenchman River is] pretty much gold in that respect.

Martin: It is. That was my ambition, to get a chunk of this river when I was a kid because I knew Larsons, Larson Ranch good. And there's only three ranches left down here. There's the Dixon ranch, at that time there was a Gillespie Ranch down in there. So then I had a chance to get at the ... get this ranch, so I bought it in '61. That was my dream, to get on the Frenchman River.

Lee: Yeah, isn't that amazing.

Laura: And our son, he's travelled all over the States, he's travelled all over Canada. When he comes back, he says, 'You know, Mom, there's no place like this ranch. ...

Lee: And it's because of the right combination.

Martin: Well this is your whole Frenchman River valley right up to Eastend.

Laura: Why do you think the Park is so interested in this area? They said that they want to preserve it. What are we doing? We are preserving. And if you look at our ranch and you look at that ranch that they've got up there that they said that they are preserving, the Larson Ranch. Look at the mess that that's in.

Martin: Prairie dogs got it.

Laura: It's terrible. And if they had this place, it'd be exactly the same thing. You come

down here, it would break my heart to see all that down here. When we've worked so hard to get what we have got and they'd have the prairie dogs take over and have little turnouts all over the place. That's not natural.

Laura points to a union of meanings in their cultural landscape. Despite the challenges of high taxation and so on that some elder residents expressed, the ranches that continue in these areas are part of a lineage of ranching that have characterised this part of Canada. Personal and collective memories of people and places such as the “76” or “Turkey Track” ranches mentioned earlier are vitally important to the meanings elder residents such as *Martin* and *Laura* derive from their cultural landscape.

Hence, this begs the question: Does the act of “re-membering” or the “re-aggregation of members, the figures who belong to one’s life story, one’s own prior selves,” as Marie Cattell (2002, 84) states, change if those members have never ceased to be a part of the memory-life of an individual? A person or a place may not require “re-membering” by some who have aged in place, for a “dis-aggregation” has not occurred. People and places are ever-present in the cultural landscape in the dilapidated buildings or the old corrals in the countryside of Val Marie (Figure 10). If this is so, then the potential loss of the crucibles of memory (Archibald 1999) and the accompanying meaning will be rejected and resisted. The ethics of elder residents that draw on worldviews developed when they were growing up and making a living cause them to judge changes that yield the loss of meanings to be wrong.



Figure 10: Old corral in countryside around Val Marie (Source: Lee Everts).

The potential loss is also one of home and ownership of home. As touched on previously, some feel ownership is not only sealed in ink. The reciprocal ownership is brought to the fore by triggers of meaning that exist in places throughout the cultural landscape. These triggers are deeply interwoven because simply and most poignantly, they are often symbols of home. In Chapter Four, I referred to comments that *Richard* in Hafford had made, summing up the importance of home: “Home to most people is the most prestigious, no matter what quality it is ... the most prestigious component of anyone’s life.” For these individuals, home is one of the threads of meaning that bind together with other threads of meaning, such as the value of the land for ranching or being part of the lineage of ranching in this part of Canada. The sources of meaning collectively translate into a commitment of preservation for the cultural landscape that is home and a symbol of a decades-long work-life, ownership, and independence.

However, the question as to *what* is being preserved invariably surfaces. This is quickly followed by *who* decides what is to be preserved. Individuals such as *Martin* and *Laura* may be more than willing to share their part of the world with the future generations of family, their immediate community, as well as the imagined community, such as visitors to their part of

Saskatchewan. If this is to be the case, they must feel the land is theirs to share and theirs to preserve. After all, it is still their home. However, the dominant meanings now shaping these areas may not correspond with meanings that elder residents derive from the cultural landscape. Such concerns have been played out in and around Val Marie.

When the GNP was being proposed, public hearings sought the opinions of local residents. One comment of a local resident reflects some of the lingering and still-potent meanings (Joint Federal-Provincial Committee on the Proposed Grasslands National Park 1976, 21):

The Natural History Society say they want to protect the natural grasslands, the prairie dogs and other unique creatures in the area. I say the rancher has done a commendable job preserving all of these and more. I only hope that you the Hearings Board in your wisdom see fit to preserve a diminishing breed of people – the rancher.

This comment may be from decades ago, but it demonstrates how some fear how the meanings they associate with a way of life are at stake. According to some, the GNP advocates an ideology that assumes the role of protector of the land (MacEwan 1976), protection that is not needed and impinges on the lives of ranchers in particular.

Moreover, for some elder residents, their conception of a meaningful cultural landscape contrasts with that of the GNP. Like the GNP, the continuity of the prairie grassland is both meaningful and important. However, a *living* cultural landscape that includes working and living ranchers and farmers is not a value these elder residents share with the GNP. Consequently, some elder residents feel alienated by meanings that counter ones they have mapped onto the cultural landscape while growing up and making a living. It is a way of life and source of meaning from which some elder residents feel a widening separation.

Similarly, not all elder residents in and around Hafford recognise the meanings that the RLBR imparts onto the cultural landscape as complementary to their own. However, the mandate of biosphere reserves preserves the living cultural landscape of which the environment and

communities are part. In contrast, the purpose of the GNP does not include the preservation of a living cultural landscape. Therefore, the way of life of elder residents can be more readily complemented by those of the biosphere reserve in comparison to those of a national park. Either way, given social and economic changes in the communities, agriculture, or the formation of the RLBR and GNP, the cultural landscape must somehow remain recognisable and therefore coherent, as Antrop (2005) explained earlier.

6.4 – Finding continuity of meaning

In this chapter, the narratives of elder residents disclosed how they felt separated from meanings that reflected their connection with their cultural landscape. For instance, the meanings that have engendered a connection has been hindered, sometimes acutely, by the loss of communities. For individuals such as *Lilian*, the separation has been symbolised vividly by the absence of the faces and names to match the mailboxes that still line the road. For others, the loss presented by changes in agriculture yielded barriers to a continuity they took for granted – for instance, that there *would* be a farm to which one could return.

The narratives here that capture the loss or change in meaning encourage sources of meaning that elder residents express in the following Chapter. As Chapter Seven explores, some of the narratives of elder residents reflect a continuity that extends beyond their ‘selves.’ Their ideas and perspectives are indicative of their ethics, part of which signifies the wish to think beyond their own interests or living ethically (Singer 1995). Recalling the discussion of ethics in Chapter Two, Paul Roebuck (1999, 19) considers ethics to be inherently tied to meaning, revolving round the question of “... how we (or others) should live, mindful of ends, means and intentions.” The ethics of elder residents hinge on this idea, whether it is the concern for “too much independence” that *Walt* indicated as limiting inter-generational connection he remembered when he was younger, the inability to provide “good food” and not “poison,” or an agricultural

system that tends to ignore what *Mike* considers and believes to be the bottom line – the satisfaction of helping a neighbour.

The meanings elder residents shared in Chapters Four and Five join with the issues discussed above that reflect sources of meanings that separate, rather than connect, elder residents to their cultural landscape. Collectively however, the sources of meaning that connect and separate have encouraged some elder residents to think beyond their own interests and weave together some of the various disparate strands of meanings that currently animate their cultural landscape.

Given meanings that reflect the current malaise of declining communities, some elder residents have sought to further meanings that echo with continuity. In so doing, the cultural landscape remains coherent and recognisable (Antrop 2005) and as Chapter Eight explores further, this encourages a sense of commitment and engagement in the future of the cultural landscape of which elder residents play an important part. With characteristic resourcefulness and ingenuity, elder residents are seeking to quietly and subtly resist and affect the various meanings that influence their cultural landscape. Chapter Seven explores these ideas.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONTINUITY OF MEANING

The question guiding the current chapter is, how do elder residents cultivate a continuity of meanings that they derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape? Influenced by their ethics and related value judgements, the following discussion explores the meanings that elder residents feel have been important in their own lives, meanings they seek to maintain and sustain in their living cultural landscape.

The continuity of meanings hearkens to meanings that have reflected a connection to their cultural landscape as examined in Chapters Four and Five. Working toward a continuity of meanings requires that elder residents reconcile disparate sources of meaning. Hence, the ideas and perspectives addressed in the current chapter refer to actions that counter the meanings of separation that elder residents shared in Chapter Six.

As mentioned previously, the RLBR and GNP have become tied to the social, cultural, and economic development in and around Hafford and Val Marie. In this light, Chapter Seven also focusses on the meanings of elder residents that harmonise with those of RLBR and GNP. For instance, a continuity of meaning also contributes to the sustainability of the interconnected communities.

Although addressed more fully in Chapter Eight, the following discussion helps to convey how the meanings of elder residents contribute to the coherency and recognisability of their cultural landscape and ultimately its identity.

7.1 – Seeking continuity of meanings in the cultural landscape

The lives of most elder residents in and around Val Marie and Hafford have, directly or indirectly, revolved around agriculture. All the elder residents who participated in the current research have been, in the present or the past, directly associated with agriculture. For some, agriculture, in the form of ranching or farming, is an unbreakable bond and a source of identity in the continuity of meaning this bond offers.

In fact, elder residents in Hafford referred to the continuity inherent in the lure of farming. For several, the details of why or how were inexplicable, and they simply called on the credo that, “Once a farmer, always a farmer.” As *Walt* explained, “Well, they say, once a farmer, always a farmer. Land was the main thing and I guess it’s in the blood.” While no one in Val Marie expressed these same words, the comments of farmers and ranchers reflected a satisfaction in their choice of livelihood. *Pierre* succinctly commented, “The grass is no greener at the neighbours’ than it is here.”

In some form or another, their words reflected a welcome inevitability that has coloured their calling to farming or ranching. As Roy Baumeister (1991, 119) noted, a “call” to work may involve “... a sense of responsibility for the greater good of society, or it may be based in a sense of obligation to one’s own potential and fulfilment.” Correspondingly, *Robert* in Hafford expressed how the lure of farming brought him back to the land when he explained, “Well, I was ... once you’re a farm boy, your blood is ... you’re still yearning for the farm. Gee, the freedom – being your own boss.” As *Robert* described in Chapter Four, “It’s the land that produces your bread and butter ... the backbone of the world actually is your farming and communities. Feed the countries.” However much his answer to the calling revolves around his own freedom and well-being, this is only one element of the continuity his words imply. His words and those of others, such as *Jean-Michel* or *Peter* near Val Marie, who also felt the tug back to the land where they grew up, suggest the sense of responsibility noted by Baumeister

(1991). In the context of the current discussion, interwoven with the meaning that brought *Robert* back to agriculture, is the intention to continue the meanings derived from the sense of responsibility to “feed the countries.” This reflects a source of meaning embedded in the meanings *Robert* has sought to continue.

Nowadays, the continuity of meanings he derives from the farm and farming – what called him and others back to the land – continues as his son now farms the land:

Lee: [W]hat about ... the place where you grew up? [I]s that still around?

Robert: Oh, the farm itself? Oh yeah. My oldest son has it now. He's farming, yeah, on it, so it's still the old homestead.

Lee: So even the farm where you grew up, when you were younger?

Robert: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the same. Yes, that's going to be the third generation.

Lee: Wow. And how do you feel about that?

Robert: Very good. I feel very good about it. I still go help him. Because he's out working and if anything, I always go and help him out. So, it's ...

Lee: And what do you like about that?

Robert: Well, it reminds me of good ol' days. But as you get older, you want to work only so much. Yeah. I help him whenever he needs help. Yeah, it's a reminder that, 'Hey, I still remember how to do things ...'

Here, the idea of a continuity of meanings related to the family interlinks with a continuity of meanings tied to a sense of responsibility to the imagined community. Earlier, *Robert* explained the importance of the land and how, “the backbone of the world actually is your farming and communities. Feed the countries.” In referring to his descendants continuing to farm the land, *Robert* derives meaning from these connections personally. But his words also harbour recognition of, and responsibility to, those “future generations.” It is for the “future generations” or the imagined community that the three generations of farmers in his family have provided food.

Previous chapters have highlighted the meanings that are reliant primarily in the memories of elder residents. The memories of elder residents recall and “re-member,” as Cattell (2002) explained above, the green spaces and dilapidated buildings. Again, such tangible

remnants touch off a wealth of memories and their attendant meanings. Hence, these memories and meaning are also symbolic of the continuity of meaning that is housed in the cultural landscape.

Similar sentiments encourage individuals such as *Lilian* near Val Marie. Through her actions, *Lilian* has shared the continuity of meaning related to memories that have been inscribed into her cultural landscape. Such meanings include the deep rootedness and shared customs, meanings that have been translated into actions and reflect the importance *Lilian* has placed on the sources of meaning that comprise family and community. Like most of the elder residents, the loss of the tangible symbols of a once thriving community – removal of railway lines or now-dilapidated stores and houses – touch off the sentiments of loss and regret. However, for individuals such as *Lilian*, these events have been an impetus for her actions. Amongst other activities, including the spearheading of an updated history book for the region, *Lilian* also worked to mark the sites of old schools in the area. Her efforts were rewarded by the visit of a man searching for his former school:

***Lilian:** Just a month or so ago, and this is speaking of roots and what your roots mean to people or mean to yourself. About a month ago, I had a fellow visit ... [T]he RM office phoned me and said a man wanted information about a particular, a former school site. So I told them where it was and I said, 'Why do you ask?' And she said, 'Well I have a man here from Alberta and he's looking for where he went to school in 1935 or '37. He has a picture of a group of children and he wants to find this spot. Well obviously there isn't a thing left there.' We say not a thing. But there is something left there. There's cement left there. ... Anyway, I told them where he could find help in finding it and he did do that because I said it's in PFRA land and I said, you don't go there unless you get permission. But he did all of that and the fellow that worked at the PFRA, he even took him for a drive in the area and actually his home site was also down in that area and they found an old basement. So people's roots are very, very important to them. They are to me because I'm a very sentimental person. But they certainly are to many, many others and we are discovering that more all the time. I really think that this school sign project and the history book are really for the future generations. It's for us too. But it's really, really for the future generations who will have a greater appreciation of*

such things as they advance in years [laugh]. I know myself, I was interested when I was young, but you're busy and you're not as interested as you could be, should be and would like to have been because you have a different perspective on it.

Lilian captures several ideas in her account, weaving them together in an effort to explain the importance of sharing meanings invested with continuity. In this case, as the above narrative explains, the memories of a former student have buttressed the meaning of old school sites. Perhaps only the basement remains, but it is a potent “crucible of memory” (Archibald 1999, 68). The collective meanings symbolised by the school sites function in much the same way as the memories that strengthen the collective meanings associated with Saturday Nights or the “evening out” at the theatre in Val Marie. Like *Robert*, *Lilian* wishes to share the meaning animated by the school sites with the known and imagined community – currently and those to come. In much the same way, the meanings that symbolised connections with the cultural landscape in chapters four and five are ensured a measure of continuity in the memories of elder residents. But the survival of these meanings rely on their being passed on to subsequent generation to kindle new and further meanings. This transmission from one generation to another ensures the link between past, present, and future.

In this light, elder residents acknowledge how oversights and neglect for the ties among present, past and future in their own lives help to spur on their actions. Individuals such as *Jessica* near Hafford and *Lilian* closer to Val Marie intimated how their actions are a wish to extend a continuity of meaning they know exists. *Jessica* and *Lilian* especially also fear that when the younger people in the community discover the horizons of life and mortality, it will be too late. *Lilian* remembers her own elder relatives and wonders, “Why didn’t I listen more? Now there’s no one to ask.” *Jessica*, near Hafford, recalls how she neglected to learn and listen. *Scott*, near Val Marie, candidly explained and hypothesised the regret that may eventually follow missed opportunities to listen and recognise the inherent link between present, past, and future:

Scott: When he was young, he was too smart, he already knew everything. And that was the thing, people were ready and wanted to talk. But you were too smart. You wanted to know the answer to this question. And when you got the answer to this one, that was it. And all them people are the same; they go for years, they ... never say anything. And then there is a point when, yeah, they're ready to talk. But if they don't happen to have anybody there ... find anybody who wants to listen, then that's the end of it.

In many ways, this is what drives *Lilian* – for there to not be an “end of it,” as *Scott* explains, and at the very least to leave the door open for future generations to re-weave the meanings into their own lives.

Jessica echoes *Lilian's* sentiment, explaining her motivation to ensure a continuity of meanings that, in part, relate explicitly to sustainability:

Jessica: Well we have a few years behind us and we've seen a few things taken away from us because we haven't been active enough sometimes perhaps. Or we were too busy to be doing something about it or from neglect or whatever. And so we have something to share with our younger generation in that respect. Our role probably should be to make people aware of how easily we can do something and to always be on our toes and vigilant in order to keep our sustainability.

Responding to social changes and challenges indicative of the decline of town and countryside have inspired motivation to continue particular meanings.

When *Jessica* speaks of sustainability, the continuity of meanings she derives from her landscape interlink with organisations such as the RLBR. Like the GNP, the RLBR furthers and stands for meanings that characterise the continuation of meanings imparted by some of the elder residents. As Wright, Caserta and Lund (2003) note in Chapter Two, sentiments of legacy and sustainability may be natural partners. The complementary partnership is noticeable in the meanings that imbue the relationship between some elder residents and their cultural landscape.

7.2 – A living cultural landscape: The RLBR and GNP

7.2.1 – Complementary meanings

As previous chapters have explored, the changes resulting from the formation of RLBR and GNP have yielded a plethora of diverse sentiments – joy, frustration, disregard, and contentment – within the cultural landscape in and around Hafford and Val Marie. Regardless, the RLBR and GNP also contribute to the continuation of meanings that enliven the cultural landscape. And like the elder residents, the RLBR and GNP also help shape the identity of the cultural landscape. Part of the ‘reason to be’ for biosphere reserves pivots on ensuring the sustainability of cultural and natural landscapes for the benefit of future generations (Matsuura 2005). The same can be said, in part, for national parks such as the GNP (Parks Canada 2002).

Similar to *Jessica* in the previous section, *Marianne* explained her ideas regarding the idea of leaving her land and in effect, as Wright, Caserta and Lund (2003) observe, her legacy. While her thoughts reflect the various connections discussed in Chapter Four – deep rootedness or work mingled with life – she also explains how these meanings weave together with the idea of continuity:

Lee: And I was just wondering, when you think of your link with the land ... what would you say is the nub of it or the heart of it, I suppose – if we were to go up to your farm, I suppose and drive up and the things that you’d think about?

Marianne: Well it’s all that has been accumulated over the years, what has been done there. We’re proud of it, what we’ve done. We try and keep it up as well as we can. ... Take pride in what you’re doing. It’s everything.

Lee: And in your particular case ...

Marianne: We’ve always, yes. Respect the land, you know, because it’s all we’ve got.

Marianne intimates how her sense of integration in what has been “accumulated over the years” is a source of pride. The palimpsest of meanings she derives from her relationship with the cultural landscape reflects a continuity she seeks to maintain.

The idea of a continuity of meaning that individuals such as *Marianne* intimate includes a recognition of interests beyond her self and family. Along with the meaning embedded in the land on which her family farms, *Marianne* also wishes to share the legacy and continuity of what has accumulated over the years. As noted above, *Marianne* explains how she and her family need to “Respect the land,” explaining how “it’s all we’ve got.” Her sentiment is akin to the tenets of sustainability.³⁵ Hence, her respect for the land emerges from a realisation that the land must meet “... the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs....” (Brundtland 1987, 24). For individuals such as *Marianne*, the meanings that she derives from her relationship with the cultural landscape is closely linked with a continued and sustainable relationship with the land. Such aims complement the objectives and continuity of meanings held by the RLBR.

For *Tom* in Hafford, the tenets of these objectives are part of a worldview that received its foundation and properties when he was younger:

Tom: *In my upbringing, you pick up after yourself; you try to make a minimum impact on other people or other things around you. You don’t hunt unless you need to, so if you’re wealthy enough to be able to afford a fancy shotgun, you might as well just buy the damned duck in the supermarket. And you don’t dump your used oil in the creek and you don’t spray things that you don’t have to because it’s somehow isn’t ... like why would you do that? ... [T]hat was just a way of life that I was brought up to. So falling into the line of, ‘Well hey, if pelicans are an endangered species, then why would you go wreck their nest’ is a piece of logic that is beneath discussion to me. ... It’s common sense so ... But really, I got involved with the lake because I love the lake and I love the town ...*

35 As noted earlier, I am using sustainability interchangeably with the term “sustainable development.”

Tom is referring to pelicans that nest on islands in Redberry Lake, the core of the RLBR (Figure 4). The reasoning *Tom* employs abides with what he learned when growing up and a conviction that is shaped by his love of the town, countryside, and of course, the lake (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Reflecting on Redberry Lake
(Source: Victoria Herman).

Therefore, the sources of meaning that suffuse the philosophy of the RLBR thread together with meanings of elder residents such as *Tom*. As Baumeister (1991, 15) explains, meanings are “shared mental representations among things, events and relationships. Thus, meaning connects things.” Here, ethics and value judgements born of lessons learned when *Tom* was younger allows him to weave together and make sense of the relationship between people and wildlife such as pelicans or the water itself.

His reasoning comprises a continuity of meaningful interconnections that abide with his ethics and conveyed simply: “you try to make a minimum impact.” His ethics resonate in his words and strike a chord with the idea of living ethically and the recognition of interests beyond one’s own (Singer 1995). During our conversation, *Tom* emphasised how the establishment of the RLBR has been, and continues to be, a collective effort. The RLBR found its inception and

continues by virtue of a meeting of individuals and groups with mutual and complementary sources of meaning. Still, the following narrative exemplifies *Tom's* ethics and the importance he has placed on the values that the RLBR embodies, values that complement his own. Although people in general adhere to myriad values, some we regard as more significant:

Tom: ... [E]very now and then, you stand up and say, 'Here's a warning flag,' or 'Wait a minute ...' Remember that there's such a thing as civil rights and human rights. But not kind of like getting too pedantic about it. That's what I felt this [importance of Redberry Lake's survival] was and certainly the Man and the Biosphere came up out of that. And it was not my suggestion. I took the suggestion from a fellow who stayed here about why shouldn't we get a Biosphere Reserve. He said, 'It fits already. It fits.' Hello there. So I started to take a look. But I didn't come up with that idea. He just kind of called my attention to the marriage of thoughts and potential and geography, technical too.

Tom's actions signify his efforts to continue meanings that draw on personal values and imbibe his ethics. His actions reflect an interest in the continuity of meanings that are valuable to him, the RLBR, members of the immediate and the imagined community (such as tourists or researchers). All can potentially derive meanings from Redberry Lake, a place in the cultural landscape.

Jessica also conveys her commitment to the continuity of meanings that infuse her ethics. She remembers going for walks with her mother. Perhaps at the time, the wild strawberries that dotted the ditches with colour and perfume were “natural” – of nature and expected. But as *Jessica* explained during our conversations, these attributes of her cultural landscape have disappeared. The meaning no doubt weaves together with other sources of meaning such as “deep rootedness” and “home” discussed earlier. However, it also tangles with the changes such as widened roads and pesticides.

As *Jessica* explains, “There were a lot of Lady's Slippers that are no longer there because of the pesticides. We saw a lot of the Prairie Lily which we rarely see now. They grow up [at]

Redberry Lake, probably only where we can see them....” The sources of meanings that symbolised her connection with the cultural landscape link and braid with those emblematic of a separation from that cultural landscape. However uneasy the mingling of meanings, *Jessica* has sought to share the continuity of meaning she remembers from when she was younger. As noted in Chapter Four, these include the entwined meanings related to family, home, and an affinity with the land or “Nature”. Hence, she speaks of her grandchildren and her role as teacher-learner:

***Jessica:** So those are some of the things that I tell them. I also learn from them that they learn a lot in school about the need for protecting nature. The one that is grade two, when she was in grade one, and even in kindergarten, they had an Earth Day in school. And of course she told me, we have to look after our nature for the next generation. So, they’re learning a lot in school which I’m very thankful for and that’s another aspect because it’s part of the education system here at the local central school.*

Jessica’s ethics encourage her to think beyond her own interests.

From another angle, the idea of living ethically can be reinterpreted; individuals such as *Jessica* recognise how their own interests entwine with those of generations to come. The meanings she has customarily derived from her cultural landscape correspond with those of the RLBR. Consequently, *Jessica* readily weaves the aims of the Biosphere Reserve with her own intentions. In so doing, she contributes to the continuity of particular meanings, providing an opportunity for future generations to also encounter, experience, and interpret these sources of meaning.

Likewise, in and around Val Marie, the meanings that the GNP imparts onto the cultural landscape find an affinity with elder residents such as *Zoé*. Chapter Five touched on meanings that connote her feeling of unity with the land. Such meanings contribute to a continuity that entails weaving together connections between people and “nonhumans” such as the grassland and coyotes (Figure 12). As she explains:

***Zoé:** It’s alive with spirit. It’s a very spiritual place. There are other ... there are many*

places like that. I mean, as the seasons change, this ... We have this association with the land. I think for me it is the creation aspect that dominates my spiritual life. If all that ever happened to me when I were to die was that I could be buried on the prairie and my bones could rot and I could turn into a buffalo bean or a crocus or a blade of grass, that would be good enough because for me, that would be eternity. To be something else, the only thing that could destroy my hope for eternity would be to have somebody plough up those places where the blade of grass is. And that's why the Grassland Park is significant for me. As I think more and more about it, I think my ashes will be scattered in the Park because that will go on. They won't be lost for eternity. They'll be there. They can be. And they won't be contained. I can't imagine being buried in a coffin. Had to say that I can't imagine. I want my body ... I wouldn't care. Let my body ... throw my body on the prairie and let the coyotes chew it up and let whatever happens happen. Let the prairie chickens romp on my ashes or whatever. But I don't want to be in a coffin and I don't want to be ... I just want to be on the prairie. Just be there. Forever.



Figure 12: Photograph of grassland near Val Marie (Source: Lee Everts). The upper corner shows a close up of flora in bloom (Source: Maureen Reed).

As *Zoé* explained in Chapter Five, she considers herself to be a part of land: "... it's almost like if you say 'nature,' like I see myself there too. I don't just see that as something out there. I see myself in it – in the middle of it." Recognising this relationship, *Zoé's* narrative merely speaks of her returning to the land from which she views herself as indistinguishable. Such an inherent union with the cultural landscape, may also be true for others in and around Val Marie and future generations that include visitors to the GNP.

The union or interrelationship transcends time. According to Roy Baumeister (1991, 20), "... the highest levels of meaning may refer to complex, far-reaching relationships that transcend the immediate situation and may even approach timeless or eternal perspectives." Consequently, *Zoé's* commitment to the continuity of meanings that groups such as the GNP weave into their understanding of the land cannot be disentangled from her own life. As she explained, "I just want to be on the prairie. Just be there. Forever." Such a meaning aligns well with the purpose of the GNP, to protect for all time, "a representative part of the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region" (Parks Canada 2002, 1). For *Zoé*, the purpose of the GNP (Parks Canada 2002, 1) "... to protect, for all time ..." is only natural, for past, present, and future merge in a relationship that transcends time.

The meanings of the GNP also find a strong affinity with the personal meanings of elder residents such as *Madeline*. Chapter Five explored how the changes occurring in communities impinge on the sources of meanings she and others have customarily derived from the community. For *Madeline*, meanings that she has derived from her relationship with the cultural landscape have galvanised her actions. Particularly, the continuity of meanings that *Madeline* has sought to champion are innately tied to the survival of Val Marie and the surrounding area.

In her efforts, *Madeline's* intentions reflect a coalescence of meanings noted in Chapter Four – deep rootedness, home, family, or even attributes of the community such as "Saturday Night," or the "evening out" at the theatre that marked the weekly round. *Madeline* explained

these meanings:

***Madeline:** But we knew that the Park would make Val Marie ... if Val Marie was the headquarters, you might say, for Grasslands [National] Park, you have to think that it's one of the biggest parks in Canada. And we knew that it would make Val Marie and Val Marie would ... Look what happened to Masefield. When I first came, Masefield and Val Marie were the same size – two little towns. Masefield has completely disappeared. Rosefield's disappeared. And Val Marie has stayed alive because of the Park as far as I'm concerned. And there are other considerations. Other things we were lucky in, but the Park was the big deal. It brought in people and it brought in more business and kept the town alive. And I really think that Val Marie would have went too just like those other little towns. What would keep it alive?*

Madeline's comments lend emphasis to the comments of elder residents in Chapter Six who spoke of how changes in their communities or the loss of these communities had separated them from meanings formerly a part of their cultural landscape

During our discussion, *Madeline* expressed both the pleasure and an ambition to show visitors the beauty of the area, an attribute with which she and others have lived for decades. Her actions offer a quiet and subtle resistance to the changes that have swept over the rural areas within Canada. Like *Jessica* near Hafford or *Lilian* closer to Val Marie, these changes invoke a sense of responsibility that signifies ethics that helps *Madeline* negotiate the diverse meanings in the cultural landscape:

***Madeline:** Our only chance to survive was the Grassland [National] Park and we were lucky to have it. And if we're that lucky, we've got to help a little bit. You can't leave the responsibility to everybody and strangers and everything else. You've got to do your share. Which may not be much, but every little bit you do is that much.*

Like *Tom* or *Jessica* in Hafford, *Madeline's* actions reflect her ethics. Her actions work to continue meanings that she has considered to be valuable for her immediate and known community as well as the imagined community of visitors to the Park. Moreover, the continuity of meaning that *Madeline* derives from her relationship with the cultural landscape accords with

those of the GNP.

In a similar vein, when we discussed the meaning of land, *Marianne* near Hafford expressed the innateness of humanity's link with the land. As she commented during our discussion, the land is “Something we walk on, but ... we’ve got to make our living with that. Everybody lives off the land. You may as well say. Just because you’re buying it in the store, that’s not where it grew.” It is on this common ground where individuals such as *Marianne* wish to share meanings invested with continuity. In terms of farming, although the continuity of meaning she derives from her relationship with the cultural landscape affects her family directly, that continuity of meaning also includes the rest of us – the imagined community. Accordingly, every moment we spend wandering aisles in grocery stores affirms the meaningfulness of *our* continued relationship with the land. Her comments implicitly refer to an assessment of rightness and wrongness, with her actions speaking of the balance of reasoning and recognition of wider interests.

In so doing, her ethics and those of other elder residents mirror the continuity of meaning conveyed by the RLBR. Earlier in Chapter Two, I referred to how in Biosphere Reserves specifically, sustainable development must be understood “... as an interdisciplinary task that basically affects all areas of society equally and that it sets a clearly future-oriented emphasis with responsibility for future generations” (Plachter, Kruse-Graumann, and Schulz 2005, 16). For elder residents such as *Marianne*, those “future generations” include her family as well as the unknown and imagined community who also – however indirectly – live off the land. Much like the groundbreaking work of Aldo Leopold (2005), her words as well as those of other elder residents noted above, beckon us to accept “...a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land” (Leopold 2005, 164).

However, the meanings imparted by the GNP or RLBR do not always complement with those of community members. Continuity is found in sources of meaning that may conflict, thus

urging community members to somehow reconcile the diversity of meanings. After all, the continuity of one may mean the discontinuity of another.

7.2.2 – Reconciling the diversity of meanings

As Barbara Morehouse (1996) mentioned above, the “absolute” space of a park does not always conform to the “representational” space that reflects meanings of home, work-life, or the deep rootedness of others. Recalling the cautionary words of Anthony English and Ellen Lee (2003), the discontinuities of meaning also turn on the likelihood that protected area boundaries lay across land that may contain history. Hence, the cultural landscape is already embedded with innumerable sources of meaning. The narratives of elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie animate a cultural landscape that existed before the formation of the RLBR and GNP.

The meanings that create a cultural landscape are not always harmonious. There is no easy answer to their reconciliation. As has been recognised over the years, the same piece of land can be valued for its natural heritage, its contribution to biodiversity, in addition to numerous other sources of meaning (Meinig 1979). Therefore, in a cultural landscape comprised of multiple facets of meaning, it is not surprising that sources of meaning conveyed by the GNP, ones that stem from their overall purpose, will encounter some discord. For instance, the continuity of meaning bestowed by the GNP has been understood by some as supplanting that of individuals who live in this cultural landscape. Discontinuity is the flip side of continuity.

For individuals such as *Martin* and *Laura*, their continuity of meaning is a part of their living cultural landscape. Similar to the GNP, the continuity of meanings related to the flora and fauna in their cultural landscape is important. However, in contrast to the source of meaning imparted by the GNP, for *Martin* and *Laura*, the cultural landscape of this area is also home. As *Richard* noted above, home is “the most prestigious component of anyone’s life.” A break with the continuity of home is difficult to justify or impose. It is a source of meaning that needs to be

taken into account in the multifaceted cultural landscape in and around Val Marie.

Still, while sources of meaning and their continuity are strong, they are not immutable and written in stone. In this vein, during our conversation, I asked *Emile* if he felt that his perspectives have changed over the years. His response sheds some light on how the various meanings individuals use to make sense of their relationship with their cultural landscape are mutable, shifting with the addition of other sources of meanings such as the GNP, in this instance:

***Emile:** There's no doubt that I've changed. But you pretty well have to ask the other guy about me. I know about the other guy.*

***Lee:** Well the only reason I ask you is because some people do say that, 'Yeah, that would have really bugged me twenty years ago, but I don't really care right now', or 'That's done'.*

***Emile:** Well, an example probably would be the Park taking over. Because we had the freedom to hunt. For instance, for me, I could hunt all over as long as I got along with the guy that owned the land, I had the freedom to go hunt there. But now, they've taken that away. So, it kind of p'd me off for a while and then I thought, well, there's still enough area to hunt. And the Park's going to save this country as far as I was concerned. Because if they didn't take it, then it would belong to one or two ranchers and then controlled by them and this way, everybody gets to enjoy it and to me, that's pretty important. And also, I've got my freedom to go there myself.*

Whether his fears would have come to pass is uncertain. Still, *Emile* brings important relief to several different sources of meaning in his narrative. They reflect ethics that affirm interests of others beyond his own personal meanings. Such interests include those conveyed by the purpose of the GNP and like others in and around Val Marie, the continuity of meaning includes the survival of the town. Furthermore, his narrative also extends a continuity of meaning to future generations such as visitors to the park – "... this way, everybody gets to enjoy it and to me, that's pretty important."

However, *Emile* also refers to the "Park taking over," a sentiment reminiscent of those

present during the initial proposal for the park. “Taking over” reflects the feeling that the Park threatens to break continuities of meaning related to attributes such as ownership, independence, home, and family. In so doing, the presence of the GNP may also symbolise an element of the transition, as many dying agricultural communities can attest, from locally controlled agriculture to what *Stephen* has called “corporate farming.” Since many elder residents have been ranching or farming on the land for decades, their personal and collective memory may recall when ownership of the land was welcomed by the government of the Dominion of Canada (Warnock 2004). The GNP represents a change in ownership and control of the land itself, in addition to the meaningful relationships with that land. The various relationships with the land would include an investment in a continuity of meanings related to family, community, work-life, and so on.

Nonetheless, for individuals such as *Emile*, the notion of “them” and “us” has altered with the ongoing changes in these areas. Perhaps in the past, the GNP was largely “them.” But it has increasingly become “us” in terms of its incorporation into the rhythms of Val Marie and the surrounding area. The RLBR has also become part of the cultural landscape in and around Hafford and thus a part of the process of change.

Like the GNP, the RLBR is also one of the most significant changes that have affected the cultural landscape of elder residents in and around Hafford. As mentioned, *Tom* helped to spearhead its formation, owing to the continuity of meaning he sought to embrace and share. However, some sentiments of wariness and scepticism reflect an uncertainty of interweaving personal meanings with those of the RLBR.

The presence of the RLBR and the meanings it imparts accord with those of the elder residents I mentioned above. However, for *Stephen*, the protected area is less straightforward in its contribution to the continuity of meanings. *Stephen* is not opposed to the RLBR. Rather, when I spoke with him, he remains wary and unwilling to readily entwine the meanings he has traditionally derived from his cultural landscape – deep rootedness and an unmitigated love of the

land – with those of the RLBR:

***Stephen:** I hold a (very small now) hope in that United Nations biosphere concept of living benignly with the land. The plunder factor economically enforced overrules the idea of stepping lightly, demanding less of the land, of leaving a healthy future for children, of leaving parts of the landscape for the wild, forever. Most scary is that almost a total majority of the Western masses have been programmed to and have accepted this rabid artificial living environment, dangerous as it is, and would not return to more natural ways of life even as their own children suffer from the effects of the chemicals and so much more. So unless the UN gives itself the power to mandate (first) a reduction and then as end to the corporate/chemical usage process, our Redberry watershed “biosphere” is but a sick joke.*

Stephen's words brim with ethics that unquestionably signals his dissatisfaction with what he terms the “plunder factor” of agriculture. Like *Jessica*, he seeks to cultivate a healthy future for children, the future generation, and he recognises similar objectives in the tenets of the UN-designated RLBR. Nonetheless, other sources of meaning that also shape the cultural landscape, those leading to the “rabid artificial living environment,” are difficult to reconcile.

In order for the cultural landscape to remain coherent and recognisable, as Antrop (2005) explained above, the diverse meanings that exist in the cultural landscape must be somehow woven together. Elder residents such as *Stephen* have weighed the pros and cons of hope – optimism periodically diluted by pessimism – that their actions will make a difference. For *Stephen*, the idea of commitment to a continuity of meanings for future generations lies at the heart of his actions. Like *Emile* in Val Marie, he considers and deliberates on the meanings that animate the cultural landscape and indicates how elder residents are part of the process of change.

Engendering a continuity of meaning, elder residents such as those in the current chapter, seek to offer future generations with the opportunity to incorporate meanings that have animated their cultural landscape. In so doing, elder residents are active participants in working toward ensuring the coherence and recognisability of the cultural landscape.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION – “SEEING THINGS GROW”

11 June, 2005 – Val Marie

[Y]ou can't take apart and understand a land based on its individual pieces. They're all there – people in the past, present and future, along with a million different places and meanings. Still, it's the whole thing that is what you see or feel. People, no matter for what reason, have to grow into a land. And they've got to know into what land they want to grow. And in the growing, there'll be change. And so you shift a little here and there according to that change.

(Excerpt from my field journal)



Figure 13: Sign located along the road for the Town of Hafford (left photograph – Source: Maureen Reed); sign for Val Marie located along the railbed (right photograph – Source: Lee Everts).

8.1 – Thinking of cultural landscapes

Well I just love ... like in the Spring, the grass is going to start growing and you just, you've got to love seeing it grow and the cows go out there and the calves eating this grass. And the calves are growing and every week they look like they grew a couple of inches and like it's just, the glory of seeing things grow. That's the love of the land.

James in Hafford

During the conversation I had with *James*, he shared the above sentiment – the meaning and refreshing reward of planting something and seeing it grow. While it is of personal value, the sentiment can also more broadly apply to the meanings elder residents derive from their cultural landscape. To see something grow is to contribute to and feel the value that accompanies growth and of course, change.

The purpose of the current research has been to explore the meanings that elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie derive from their relationship with and confer upon their cultural landscape. The shifting economic structure of agriculture and the communities of Val Marie and Hafford, as well as the establishment of the RLBR and GNP, collectively signal how the cultural landscapes of elder residents are undoubtedly changing. Amidst these changes, the meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape emerge from the ideas and perspectives contained in their narratives. The broad themes of connection, separation, and continuity that I distilled in the narratives guided the identification of the meanings. In turn, the meanings not only indicated how elder residents are engaged by and involved in their changing cultural landscapes. They also contribute to its coherency, helping to shape its identity.

Chapters Four and Five explored the meanings that enlivened the cultural landscape while elder residents were growing up and making a living when younger. The question these chapters addressed is, how do elder residents derive meaning in relation to their earlier lives growing up,

working, and making a living in their cultural landscape? Personal and collective memories yielded countless meanings that connect elder residents to their cultural landscape: deep rootedness, events, places such as homesteads of their forebears, having a “job-life” or “chores that were pleasures,” as some elder residents noted, school sites, or community events. Some meanings were housed primarily in memory, spurred by tangible remnants in the cultural landscape: green spaces, broken down store fronts, or now-quiet grain elevators. Intrinsically, such connections helped pinpoint and isolate the emotional stake that elder residents have in their changing cultural landscape and their place in it. But meanings suggestive of their emotional stake were sharpened when the meaningful connections encountered conflicting ones that were indicative of separation or loss.

In Chapter Six, elder residents expressed meanings evocative of separation from their cultural landscape. The question that has guided this chapter is, how do the elder residents derive meanings that reflect a separation from their cultural landscape? The meanings of elder residents signify what they feel they have already lost or stand to lose. As discussed in previous chapters, elder residents have felt a separation from meanings related to changes in agriculture, the social and economic structure of their communities, and the formation of the RLBR and GNP. In this light, their narratives point to the disjuncture between unwelcome changes in the cultural landscape and what has become a part of their worldview: unity with the land, attributes of community such as familiarity and togetherness, job mingled imperceptibly with life, or the path leading to the meaning of home. The subsequent meanings contribute intrinsically to the cultural landscape and lend to its uniqueness.

Whether connoting a connection or separation and in addition to contributing to the intrinsic nature of cultural landscapes, the meanings of elder residents can also have a substantive impact. Substantively, decision-makers can incorporate the meanings of elder residents in their decision-making processes to ensure the cultural landscape maintains its coherency and

recognisability (Antrop 2005) for all members of the community. For example, the meanings, conviction, and commitment that identify the relationship between elder residents and their cultural landscape diminishes. As a result, some individuals may feel marginalised and unable to participate in decisions related to land or a community that has become unrecognisable to them.

Perhaps in response to the potential or existing incoherency and unrecognisability of their cultural landscape, the words and efforts of some elder residents stressed a continuity of meaning that arises from their worldviews. Chapter Seven addressed the theme of continuity and has been guided by the question, how do elder residents cultivate a continuity of meanings that they derive from their relationship with the cultural landscape? Some of the meanings that elder residents have sought to continue pivot on memories of locations in the cultural landscape that no longer exist tangibly. Hence, individuals such as *Lilian* have garnered a sense of continuity by marking the location of structures such as old school sites that are fonts of memory and meaning. Hearing the call of farming or ranching, other elder residents have worked to further a continuity of meaning linked to agriculture. For certain elder residents, the continuity of meaning hinges on their affinity and unity with the land.

The actions and intentions of elder residents may be conceived of as sustainability of the land, in a manner supported by the RLBR and GNP, be that sustainability linked to a complaint with current agricultural practices, or a “natural law” as *Lilian* explained, a reference to the actions of her forebears. It can also be akin to common sense as *Tom* noted, “...you pick up after yourself; you try to make a minimum impact on other people or other things around you.” Working toward a continuity of meaning can also rely on the inherent bond between the self and the natural world.

Because meaning is central in forging the identity of the cultural landscape, it is understandable for some elder residents to work toward ensuring the continuity of particular meanings. The individual meanings that inhabit a cultural landscape, such as those of elder

residents, are essential intrinsically as well as the contribution these meanings make to the identity of the overall cultural landscape. As mentioned, the meanings that signify connections, separation, and continuity contribute to the coherence and identity of the cultural landscape. The sources of meaning attached to the various places that comprise the cultural landscape and the resulting senses of place – positive or negative – are individual and unique. In this way, the ideas and perspectives of elder residents need to be both known and perceptible; they contribute to the individual and unique sources of meaning.

Furthermore, the individual and unique sources of meaning, such as those shared by elder residents, combine holistically to convey the uniqueness and identity of the overall cultural landscape. To borrow the familiar adage, meaning in a cultural landscape demands that one be able to see the 'forest for the trees' as well as the reverse, the 'trees for the forest.' A cultural landscape relies on clarity in both respects. Moreover, the efforts of elder residents to continue certain meanings augments the identity and more to the point, the continued recognisability of the cultural landscape.

Although the unique and particular meanings of the elder residents contribute to the identity of the cultural landscape, certain attributes of the cultural landscape are shared with others. In this way, the themes of deep rootedness, changes in agriculture, or changes in the structure of the community, including the formation of the RLBR and GNP, are similar, whether in and around Hafford or Val Marie. As the previous chapters explain, the meanings of elder residents exhibit these similarities. However, upon closer scrutiny, the uniqueness of the cultural landscape takes shape. As the foregoing discussion has noted, despite the similarities, there are differences between the cultural landscapes in and around Hafford and Val Marie. One must often be metaphorically 'closer' to witness the uniqueness and identity of the individual meanings and the cultural landscape. Still, regardless of the uniqueness of those meanings and the cultural landscape itself, there are themes of meaning that cultural landscapes share.

With this said, the exploration in previous chapters indicates how finding meaning in the cultural landscape is augmented by a consideration and deliberation of what is the right way to be in the cultural landscape. While cultural landscapes hinge on the interaction between humankind and the natural environment, (as defined in Chapter Two, Section 2.1), this interaction is guided by one's ethics. Hence, our ethics can play a role in how cultural landscapes reflect "... an intense, uncomfortable, competitive place-related, becoming-in-the-world together" (Cloke and Jones 2004, 339). In the current research, elder residents have located meanings after deliberation and consideration that has drawn on their worldviews. As part of these relationships, elder residents hearken to their ethics.

8.2 – Toward an ethical landscape

In the first chapter, Paul Roebuck (1999, 19) explained, "[w]hen we think about ethics ... [w]e ask how we (or others) should live, mindful of ends, means and intentions." Ethics refer to moral judgments that address questions of good, bad, better, worse – how we should be and act (Smith 2000). Consequently, elder residents deliberate on the rightness or wrongness in their holistic cultural landscape. As the previous chapters examine, the ethics of some elder residents signify the idea of living ethically and thinking beyond one's own interests. However variable in nature, their actions recognise the interests of future generations within their family, the known and immediate community, as well as the imagined community. This lies at the heart of living ethically (Singer 1995). In assessing the rightness and wrongness of actions played out in the cultural landscape and thinking beyond their own interests, elder residents' meanings shape the cultural landscape. Thus, they contribute to an ethical landscape.

In so doing, the efforts of elder residents relate to those of the RLBR or GNP. Chapter Seven addresses how the commitment to sustainability for the RLBR and the GNP chime with elder residents who also derive meaning and value from the sustainability of the cultural

landscapes they share with these organisations. Ironically, ensuring a continuity of meaning for some has led to discord with the meanings that changes such as the establishment of the GNP impart onto the cultural landscape. But meanings are mutable.

The ethical landscape is embodied by a holism that incorporates varied and sometimes conflicting sources of meaning. Regardless of their colour or stripe, the diverse meanings weave into the web of meanings that identify the cultural landscape. Much as D.W. Meinig (1979) explained decades ago in his essay, “The Beholding Eye,” dependent upon one's perspective, a landscape will transform into, for instance, a potential feast of profits for some or a bread-basket to feed the people, for others.

However, it is not a matter of merely accepting the existence of myriad meanings and acknowledging how they jar one's worldview with their seeming wrongness. This is an expected component of a cultural landscape. As Paul Cloke and Owain Jones (2004, 339) remind us with respect to dwelling, likewise, a cultural landscape is “... not so much as a cosy, harmonious place-bound, being-in-the-world, but more as an *intense*, uncomfortable, competitive place-related becoming-in-the-world together.” In an ethical landscape, through the negotiation of ethics – deliberating on the good, bad, better, or worse and trying to live ethically – individuals address the junctions that exist between the diverse meanings they derive from their cultural landscape. In so doing, they help modify the competitiveness, intensity, and discomfort that characterise a cultural landscape. Ultimately, coming to terms with the disparate meanings that shape the ethical landscape is an ongoing process. The elder residents with whom I spoke are part of this ongoing process, one that continually reflects on the rightness and wrongness of the sometimes disparate meanings characterising the cultural landscape.

As part of this process, elder residents employ the past to make sense of the present. Justifying or making sense of the present with reference to the past helps to ensure future development that incorporates links among the past, present, and future (Condominas 2004). By

exploring the meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with their cultural landscape, throughout this dissertation, I have identified individual and unique sources of meaning. I have also suggested how these individual sources of meaning are necessary in the overall identity of the cultural landscape. Furthermore, as part of this research, I have sought to highlight the process by which elder residents draw on their ethics to emerge with the roster of meaningful relationships with the cultural landscape. However, one final point needs to be made – the function of meanings and the process by which they have been derived, are a form of intangible cultural heritage that over time, elder residents impart to other members of their communities.

8.3 – Intangible Cultural Heritage

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the sources of meanings that elder residents share reflect an intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The expressions, knowledge, and skills of elder residents comprise the ICH: “[T]ransmitted from generation to generation, [ICH] is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history... [providing] them with a sense of identity and continuity ...” (UNESCO 2003, 2). In being “recreated,” meanings that comprise ICH are not inherent in the place or a tangible object such as the mailboxes or the buildings that elder residents mentioned above. Rather, the meaning draws on the context in which it is found: “Meaning is not simply produced or stated: it must be recognised through a practical understanding of the world and its interpretation” (Barrett 1999, 27).

In this sense, the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape further the tenets of ICH. For example, when *Lilian* near Val Marie marks the sites of old schools, her actions provide a mooring where others, such as former students of those schools, can link their own memories and meaning. *Lilian* provides access to this heritage to allow subsequent

generations to re-weave and “constantly re-create” (UNESCO 2003, 2) the meaning of these places in their cultural landscape. Similarly, the various sources of meanings that reflect the connections of elder residents to their cultural landscape are also a source of heritage or ICH.

The ideas, perspectives, and memories of elder residents have invested the cultural landscape with meanings heretofore unknown. For instance, green spaces or dilapidated buildings are a “crucible of memory” (Archibald 1999, 68) for some of the elder residents. The intangible meanings lend sustenance to the invisible landscape (Ryden 1993), drawing the past and present together. For community members or even visitors such as myself, the memories of elder residents allow us to vicariously experience elements of the cultural landscape. As a source of heritage, such experiences add to our established personal meanings, helping us to make sense of the present – where we are at that moment, physically and figuratively.

The sources of meaning that elder residents shared have also dovetailed with their ethics. In various ways, their ethics corresponded to the ideas of sustainability and living ethically – thinking beyond oneself and accounting for other perspectives when judging good, bad, better, or worse (Singer 1995; Smith 2000). Therefore, for the elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie, their ethics and their intention to contend with, and deliberate on, the changes in their cultural landscapes are a source of ICH.

As *Marianne* explained in the context of farming, “We all live off the land.” *Marianne's* words imply how we all share a responsibility to the land and its continued sustainability, whether this responsibility is located in the field or grocery store. Similarly, elder residents in and around Val Marie such as *Lilian* also heralded meanings tied to their ethics and an ongoing and sustainable relationship with the land. In this light, elder residents conveyed a heritage that values sustainability. This is also a form of ICH.

The RLBR and GNP are part of the link between heritage and sustainability. As Chapter Seven discussed, the continuity of meaning for some elder residents harmonises with the

meanings of the RLBR and GNP. As mentioned in Chapter Two, an objective captured in the vision of the RLBR is to be a model that unites and also highlights community and economic growth as “...an ideal for human community living and sustainable environmental practice” (Sian 2001, 8). Hence, elder residents such as *Tom* and *Jessica* champion the aims of the RLBR, ones that chime with their own. In Val Marie, elder residents have embraced the GNP as complementing their own beliefs due to meanings that it imparts onto the cultural landscape. For instance, elder residents such as *Zoé* align with the aim of the GNP to protect a representative part of the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region for all time (Parks Canada 2002). In the light of ICH, the meanings of elder residents such as *Madeline* and *Emile* also convey this harmony.

However, some elder residents may feel they are being separated from their intangible heritage. To recall, Chapter Six explored the meanings related to separation. In Hafford, *Marianne* explicitly referred to the loss or separation from these meanings when she spoke of the changes in the agriculture industry and the loss of farms:

***Marianne:** Well it's like your heritage is kind of disappearing. A way of life, like you know. What's going to happen? If it continues, it's just going to be one big corporation sort of thing.*

Marianne expresses the concern of the majority of elder residents with whom I spoke. If the sources of meanings that reflect a connection with the cultural landscape are interpreted as a form of intangible heritage, it is from this heritage that some elder residents feel a separation.

As *Marianne* intimates, the various changes in the cultural landscape, such as those to agricultural production, are tied to their feeling of separation from heritage. For instance, in Chapter Six, *Peter* considered the ploughing of the prairie grassland as “total death.” The meaning that he derives from the cultural landscape reflects a sustainability and heritage that is compromised by agricultural production that often ploughs under the prairie with which *Peter*, like *Zoé* or *Stephen*, is indistinguishable. For other elder residents, such as *Martin* and *Laura*, the

cultural landscape has been interwoven with a concert of meanings linked to their work-life, community, and home, bound by personal and collective memories.

From this perspective, elder residents may disregard or resist what the RLBR and GNP symbolise for them; that is, a forgetting of an intangible heritage bound by collective memories. For elder residents such as *Martin* and *Laura*, their meanings reflect their concern that the heritage of their living landscape is jeopardised by the meanings imparted by the GNP. Both the RLBR and GNP signify change. Elder residents may fear these organisations signify a loss of their heritage, a heritage interlaced with deeply felt meaning. However, much as *Emile's* and *Stephen's* narratives exemplified above, suturing the rifts between disparate meanings is an ongoing process, one that finds anchorage in the ethics of elder residents.

Consequently, as part of ICH, elder residents offer their example – individuals have sought to confront the disparate perspectives and paths to meaning that exist in their cultural landscape. Elder residents continue to reconcile the disparities between meanings that reflect connection to and separation from their cultural landscape. The process of weaving together the various meanings is not cut and dry. Regardless, the connections captured in meanings elder residents derive from their cultural landscape reflect their effort to negotiate and make sense of disparate meanings. The elder residents who may rail against a separation from meanings they have customarily derived from their relationship with their cultural landscape also contribute to ICH. This process is part of the intangible heritage elder residents offer their communities – their commitment and conviction to try to make sense and find meaning in their cultural landscape. Ethics, and the meanings and processes it entails, are a form of ICH.

8.4 – The research in the wider scheme

8.4.1 – Contributions and limitations

The concept of a cultural landscape is one of the central themes in geography (Herbert and Matthews 2004), encompassing both tangible and intangible elements. Increasingly, workers in land use and management or urban planning are turning to the cultural landscape concept to address diverse and divergent meanings and perspectives that animate geographic areas around the world³⁶ (Naveh 2001; 2006; Davenport and Anderson 2005). The different perspectives give weight and importance to widely ranging sources of meaning that relate to such things as the sacred nature of a place, issues of tourism, the merit of various agricultural processes, and so on.

In the foregoing discussion, the cultural landscape concept has provided an ideal framework by which to explore the meanings elder residents derive from their relationships with the cultural landscape. The diversity of meanings is integral to the whole. As noted above, a complete understanding of these geographical areas demands an understanding of the perspectives of elder residents. Regardless of age, an individual derives meanings from his or her cultural landscape. Yet, *because* of age, the nature of those meanings take on a particular form. For the elder residents who participated in the current research, decades of personal and collective memories help shape their meanings and subsequently, the cultural landscape. Of course, this is not to say that younger members of these communities do not have equally valuable contributions to make. The work of Jana Berman (2006) noted below is evidence enough of this fact. However, there is room and *need* for different perspectives and ideas to animate the cultural landscape. In any case, those of all ages can make a substantive contribution.

³⁶ For example, City of Victoria. *Beacon Hill Park. Heritage Landscape Management Plan*. http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/currentprojects_beaconhill.shtml and *Rakek'ee Gok'é Godi: Places we take care of. Report of the Sahtu Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group*, 2000 (<http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/research/places/index.html>). Last accessed 8 May 2008).

The cultural landscape concept has provided a meeting place where diverse meanings co-exist and seek affinity. Toward this effort, the idea of ethics is crucial. Amidst the divergence of meanings, this dissertation has touched on how elder residents are translating the meanings they derive from their cultural landscape in accordance with the tenets of their ethics. Such an ethical landscape infused by meanings can have a substantive impact on the decisions that influence these areas (Antrop 2005).

Nonetheless, the current study is limited by its scope. In particular, it would have benefited from a broader representation within the area surrounding Hafford. For the people with whom I spoke, Hafford acts as a central service junction economically, politically, and socially. For instance, the post office functions as a meeting place for individuals in and around Hafford. Hafford is also the location for the main office of the Rural Municipality Office of Redberry. However, the RLBR encompasses this political boundary as well as those of the Rural Municipalities of Meeting Lake, Great Bend, and Douglas (RLBR 2008a). Unfortunately, the current study did not address this breadth.

Moreover, a longitudinal study would have also offered an opportunity to speak with the same people over a longer period of time. This is especially relevant given the rapidity and significance of social and economic changes occurring in these areas. One of these changes is the formation of the GNP and RLBR. On several occasions I reminded myself that the comments herein are snapshots that no doubt will change.

Given this limitation, further research can overlap with the work completed in this dissertation or begin where it has ended. The study of a cultural landscape must include not only elder residents. In the manner advocated by Zev Naveh (2001), research that focuses on multiple generations and the sources of meanings these individuals derive from their cultural landscape, would be a valuable asset to these geographical areas. Taking up one of the limitations of the current dissertation, a longitudinal study that uses the cultural landscape concept to incorporate

the different perspectives over time would be invaluable – ideas and perspectives *do* change. Furthermore, research focussed on the meanings that younger generations derive from their cultural landscape alongside, and in comparison with, elder generations would also be worthwhile in these areas.

8.4.2 – Looking at the larger scope

Given the scope of their experience and perspective, elder residents contribute a vital facet of meaning to their multifaceted cultural landscape. The contribution of particular elder residents to the vitality of their communities is widely recognised. However, for others, their contribution is less apparent. While such individuals may be acknowledged and regarded well within their communities, their ideas and perspectives may not be recognised as important facets of meaning in the cultural landscape. Nonetheless, the meanings that elder residents confer upon their cultural landscape is a valuable asset for communities seeking to maintain their social and economic viability. As some elder residents show, a continuity of meaning merges with the objectives of sustainability as defined by the recent and significant additions to these cultural landscapes – the RLBR and GNP.

Elder residents are a part of these initiatives, together with groups such as the RLBR and GNP, as well as younger members of their communities. Using the platform of ecological monitoring, recent work by Jana Berman (2006) focussed on how the tapestry of meanings felt by younger members in small communities (Eastend and Val Marie) interweave and contribute to their sense of place. The conviction and commitment of youth is similarly expressed in Hafford

where programmes such as Students All For the Earth (SAFE) indicate similar interests.³⁷ Given the current study, continued research would benefit from a multigenerational exploration of the perspectives and meanings that individuals derive from their cultural landscape.

Perspective is essential in understanding the diversity of meanings that animate the cultural landscape. Both the personal perspectives as well as the general perspective of elder residents must be acknowledged and taken into account. Central to the current research, personal perspective influence the nature of the meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape.

As I mentioned earlier, the community plan completed by the RLBR noted how the most marginalised are both the young people and seniors (Sian 2001). I do not counter this finding. The meanings that elder residents derive from their cultural landscape are indeed touched by the structural constraints imposed by society: changing agricultural practices, declining community services, and the need to follow where those services have moved, or the absence of friends and family no longer in the town or village. These structural constraints can and *do* marginalise. Nonetheless, dependent on our perspective, the ‘margins’ of society can feel and *be* the centre. Therefore, if we shift our perspective, the meanings of elder residents can then inform decisions that affect how the cultural landscape grows and changes.

The diverse and multiple meanings that elder residents derive from their relationship with

³⁷ The Hafford Central School is the only Associated School Project (ASP) School in Saskatchewan for its project “Students All For the Earth” - S.A.F.E. Being part of the ASP network, Hafford Central joins other schools around the world that are committed to UNESCO ideals. For more information, please see “The Associated Schools Project” – <http://www.unesco.ca/en/interdisciplinary/aspnet/documents/ASPnetSchoolsCANADArevmay2007.pdf>. (Last accessed 8 May, 2008). The students received an award and recognition for their involvement in a range of activities that included the Canadian Wildlife Service and raising money for Tsunami relief after the tsunami that affected southern Asia on the 26th December, 2004 (UNESCO 2006).

the cultural landscape give insight into how they can participate in and contribute to seeing the cultural landscape grow and change. As *James* intimated at the beginning of this chapter, like a calf or blades of grass on a pasture or unbroken prairie, the beauty of a cultural landscape is seeing it grow and of course, change. For elder residents in and around Hafford and Val Marie, to see it grow is to also be a part of that growth and change.



Figure 14: A rainbow appears after a brief rain shower near Val Marie (Source: Lee Everts).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Consent Forms

Consent Form – Val Marie

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Respecting a Perspective: Using oral narratives to examine the meanings seniors of Hafford and Val Marie, SK derive from the cultural landscape”. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher: Lee Everts, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan

Purpose and Procedure:

This study includes participants from Val Marie and Hafford, SK. While both Val Marie and Hafford are small, rural communities, they vary in terms of their landscape settings as well as the histories of residents. For those who have lived in Val Marie for the past three or more decades, the purpose of this study is to explore the different values and meanings that you derive from the landscape, the area around Val Marie and Grasslands National Park. I am asking you to share the experiences you have had in the landscape throughout your life and to help me understand what this landscape means to you. The intention is to provide not only an opportunity to share your views with other community members, young and old. It is also to provide for people outside of your community, a different and unique understanding of this landscape than is often given through the explanations for Grasslands National Park.

In order for me to document this knowledge, I will be speaking with you and asking questions that will permit us to discuss your opinions and ideas regarding how you understand your relationship with the landscape. If you agree to participate in this research project, we will meet for a single conversation that I will record (you will have an opportunity to review your words at a later date). If necessary, we may meet briefly for a second time in order for me to clarify what we discussed in our conversation.

The estimated time required to participate in an interview is approximately two hours. If you choose to participate, please be assured that you will be able to shut off the tape recorder at any time during our discussion.

Use of Data

The information you share with me will be used in my thesis; unpublished/published reports; and interactive, community exhibits to be held in Val Marie and Hafford. Although direct quotes will be used, if you wish to remain anonymous, a pseudonym will be used in all written materials.

Confidentiality:

Because participants in this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all or most of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said. After the interview, and prior to the data being included in a final report, you will be given an opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. This procedure will be recorded in a *Transcript Release Form*.

Having read a transcription of our conversation, you may decide to remain anonymous (in which case I will use a pseudonym when referring to your words). Otherwise, you may wish for your identity to be known as part of this research project. You will have an opportunity to make this decision on the *Transcript Release Form* where you can check the appropriate box.

An Interactive, Community Exhibit³⁸

Your words may be chosen for a small, interactive community exhibit where other residents in Hafford will be invited to read your narratives relating to your experiences in the landscape. This exhibit will remain for approximately two weeks, at which time, the exhibit in Val Marie will be moved to Hafford and the exhibit of Hafford will be moved to Val Marie.

If your words are selected, you will have an opportunity to give your consent for me to use your words in the exhibit. The objective is for other residents of Val Marie and subsequently, Hafford to read your narratives and on paper provided, to write their own experiences related to the landscape. Be assured that at any time during this exhibit, you will have an opportunity to remove your narratives from the display.

As part of these exhibits, a commemorative booklet will be compiled and given to the local museum/interpretive centre and public school library in Val Marie.

Potential Risks:

As noted above, there is a potential risk of a loss of anonymity. Dependent upon whether this is acceptable to you, I will take measures to ensure anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Beyond this risk of loss of anonymity, there are no known risks.

38 These were cancelled.

Potential Benefits:

Although the specific benefits of my research project cannot be guaranteed or foreseen, there are possible contributions you can make to your own community as well as to Hafford. Other members of your community as well as visitors to Val Marie may benefit from the ideas and perceptions derived from your experiences in the landscape. By sharing this knowledge and experience, community members can develop a sense of the similarities and differences within Val Marie as well as those between the two communities of Val Marie and Hafford. This can not only be explored in my own thesis, but also in the temporary, interactive exhibit to be mounted in Val Marie.

Storage of Information:

- ◆ Copies of my completed thesis will be held at the public school library and local museum in Val Marie and the Saskatchewan Archives Board in Saskatoon.
- ◆ Given the required written permission of the participants in this study, the audio recorded narratives as well as any transcriptions I complete will be given to the Saskatchewan Archives Board.
- ◆ Throughout the duration of my research project, all recorded materials will be stored in the office of my supervisor, Dr. Maureen Reed, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan. If you do not wish your recorded interviews and their transcriptions to be given to the Saskatchewan Archives Board, these materials will be stored at the Department of Geography for a minimum of five years.

Right to Withdraw:

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort (and without loss of relevant entitlements, without affecting academic or employment status, without losing access to relevant services et c.). If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

Questions:

If you have any questions concerning this study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided above if you have any questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on 18 January, 2005. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. The results of the study will be provided in the form of report which will be held in public school library as well as the local museum in Val Marie.

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Thank You!

Consent Form– Hafford

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Respecting a Perspective: Using oral narratives to examine the meanings seniors of Hafford and Val Marie, SK derive from the cultural landscape”. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher: Lee Everts, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan

Purpose and Procedure:

This study includes participants from Val Marie and Hafford, SK. While both Val Marie and Hafford are small, rural communities, they vary in terms of their landscape settings as well as the histories of residents. For those who have lived in Hafford for the past three or more decades, the purpose of this study is to explore the different values and meanings that you derive from the landscape, the area around Hafford and Redberry Lake. I am asking you to share the experiences you have had in the landscape throughout your life and to help me understand what this landscape means to you. The intention is to provide not only an opportunity to share your views with other community members, young and old. It is also to provide for people outside of your community, a different and unique understanding of this landscape than is often given through the explanations for RLBR.

In order for me to document this knowledge, I will be speaking with you and asking questions that will permit us to discuss your opinions and ideas regarding how you understand your relationship with the landscape. If you agree to participate in this research project, we will meet for a single conversation that I will record (you will have an opportunity to review your words at a later date). If necessary, we may meet briefly for a second time in order for me to clarify what we discussed in our conversation.

The estimated time required to participate in an interview is approximately two hours. If you choose to participate, please be assured that you will be able to shut off the tape recorder at any time during our discussion.

Use of Data

The information you share with me will be used in my thesis; unpublished/published reports; and interactive, community exhibits to be held in Hafford and Val Marie. Although direct quotes will be used, if you wish to remain anonymous, a pseudonym will be used in all written materials.

Confidentiality:

Because participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all or most of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said. After the interview, and prior to the data being included in a final report, you will be given an opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. This procedure will be recorded in a *Transcript Release Form*.

Having read a transcription of our conversation, you may decide to remain anonymous (in which case I will use a pseudonym when referring to your words). Otherwise, you may wish for your identity to be known as part of this research project. You will have an opportunity to make this decision on the *Transcript Release Form* where you can check the appropriate box.

An Interactive, Community Exhibit³⁹

Your words may be chosen for a small, interactive community display where other residents in Hafford will be invited to read your narratives relating to your experiences in the landscape. This exhibit will remain for approximately two weeks, at which time, the exhibit from Val Marie will be moved to Hafford and the exhibit of Hafford will be moved to Val Marie.

If your words are selected, you will have an opportunity to give your consent for me to use your words in the exhibit. The objective is for other residents of Hafford and subsequently, Val Marie to read your narratives and on paper provided, to write their own experiences related to the landscape. Be assured that at any time during this exhibit, you will have an opportunity to remove your narratives from the display.

As part of these exhibits, a commemorative booklet will be compiled and given to the RLBR and local library in Hafford.

Potential Risks:

As noted above, there is a potential risk of a loss of anonymity. Dependent upon whether this is acceptable to you, I will take measures to ensure anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Beyond this risk of loss of anonymity, there are no known risks.

³⁹ These were cancelled.

Potential Benefits:

Although the specific benefits of my research project cannot be guaranteed or foreseen, there are possible contributions you can make to your own community as well as to Val Marie. Other members of your community as well as visitors to Hafford may benefit from the ideas and perceptions derived from your experiences in the landscape. By sharing this knowledge and experience, community members may develop a sense of the similarities and differences within Hafford as well as those between the two communities of Hafford and Val Marie. This can not only be explored in my own thesis, but also in the temporary, interactive exhibit to be mounted in Hafford.

Storage of Information:

- ◆ Copies of my completed thesis will be held at the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Interpretive Centre and the local library in Hafford and the Saskatchewan Archives in Saskatoon.
- ◆ Given the required written permission of the participants in this study, the audio recorded narratives as well as any transcriptions I complete will be given to the Saskatchewan Archives Board.
- ◆ Throughout the duration of my research project, all recorded materials will be stored in the office of Dr. Maureen Reed, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan. If you do not wish your recorded interviews and their transcriptions to be given to the Saskatchewan Archives Board, these materials will be stored at the Department of Geography for a minimum of five years.

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Questions:

If you have any questions concerning this study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided above if you have any questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on 18 January, 2005. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. The results of the study will be provided in the form of report which will be held in Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve as well as

the community library in Hafford.

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Thank You!

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide – Val Marie

Tell me about your life when you were growing up? About your childhood? Did you grow up on a ranch/farm?

I'd be interested in you telling me what your day was like when you were young?

Where would you go and what would you do? What was the countryside like and what was it that you enjoyed? (seasons; working on the farm; walking; animals...)

Were there any stories your parents or older relatives told you about when they were growing up?

How do you think these affected how you viewed your place and relationship to the land and farming/ranching area around here?

When you were older, what was your day like then? Maybe you could take me through your morning – what did you see and do; enjoy or dislike.

And nowadays, what kinds of things do you do as part of your day? Is there anything that reminds you of when you were growing up?

If we were able to go for a drive around the area, maybe up to where you live, what would you want to show me and point out to me?

For what reasons, based on your experiences?

If you had to move somewhere else, for whatever reason, is there anything about the area that you would you miss?

From another angle, why did you remain in this part of Saskatchewan? And now, what are the reasons you remain?

So, would you say you feel connected to the area? How would you say you feel connected?

What comes to mind, when I use the word 'land'?

What comes to mind, when I use the word 'home'?

Thinking about growing up, having a family and getting older, and now as a senior, how would you say your perception of this area and the land has changed?

What are the changes you have experienced having lived and worked here over the years?

What do you see people who are younger than yourself experiencing that is similar or different from what you experienced when you were growing up and working?

Thinking about the land, do you feel there are different challenges and demands from when you began farming/ranching? In what way?

Tell me about how this has affected how you see the land.

Given the changes you have witnessed as well as your own experiences, do you have any concerns regarding the land.

To your eyes, what are the reasons this area is different and unique? What made it that way for you?

Interview Guide – Hafford

Tell me about your life when you were growing up? About your childhood? Did you grow up on a farm?

I'd be interested in you telling me what your day was like when you were young?

Where would you go and what would you do? What was the countryside like and what was it that you enjoyed? (seasons; working on the farm; walking; animals...)

Were there any stories your parents or older relatives told you about when they were growing up?

How do you think these affected how you viewed your place and relationship to the land and farming area around here?

When you were older, what was your day like then? Maybe you could take me through your morning B what did you see and do; enjoy or dislike.

And nowadays, what kinds of things do you do as part of your day? Is there anything that reminds you of when you were growing up?

If we were able to go for a drive around the area, maybe up to where you live, what would you want to show me and point out to me?

What are the reasons? (Based on your experiences)

If you had to move somewhere else, for whatever reason, is there anything about the area that you would miss?

From another angle, why did you remain in this part of Saskatchewan? And now, what are the reasons you remain?

So, would you say you feel connected to the area?

How would you say you feel connected?

What comes to mind, when I use the word 'land'?

What comes to mind, when I use the word 'home'?

Thinking about growing up, having a family and getting older, and now as a senior, how would you say your perception of this area and the land has changed?

What are the changes you have experienced having lived and worked here over the years?

What do you see people who are younger than yourself experiencing that is similar or different from what you experienced when you were growing up and working?

Thinking about the land, do you feel there are different challenges and demands from when you began farming? In what way?

Tell me about how this has affected how you see the land.

Given the changes you have witnessed as well as your own experiences, do you have any concerns regarding the land.

To your eyes, what are the reasons this area is different and unique? What made it that way for you?